

Harpers Ferry Center
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

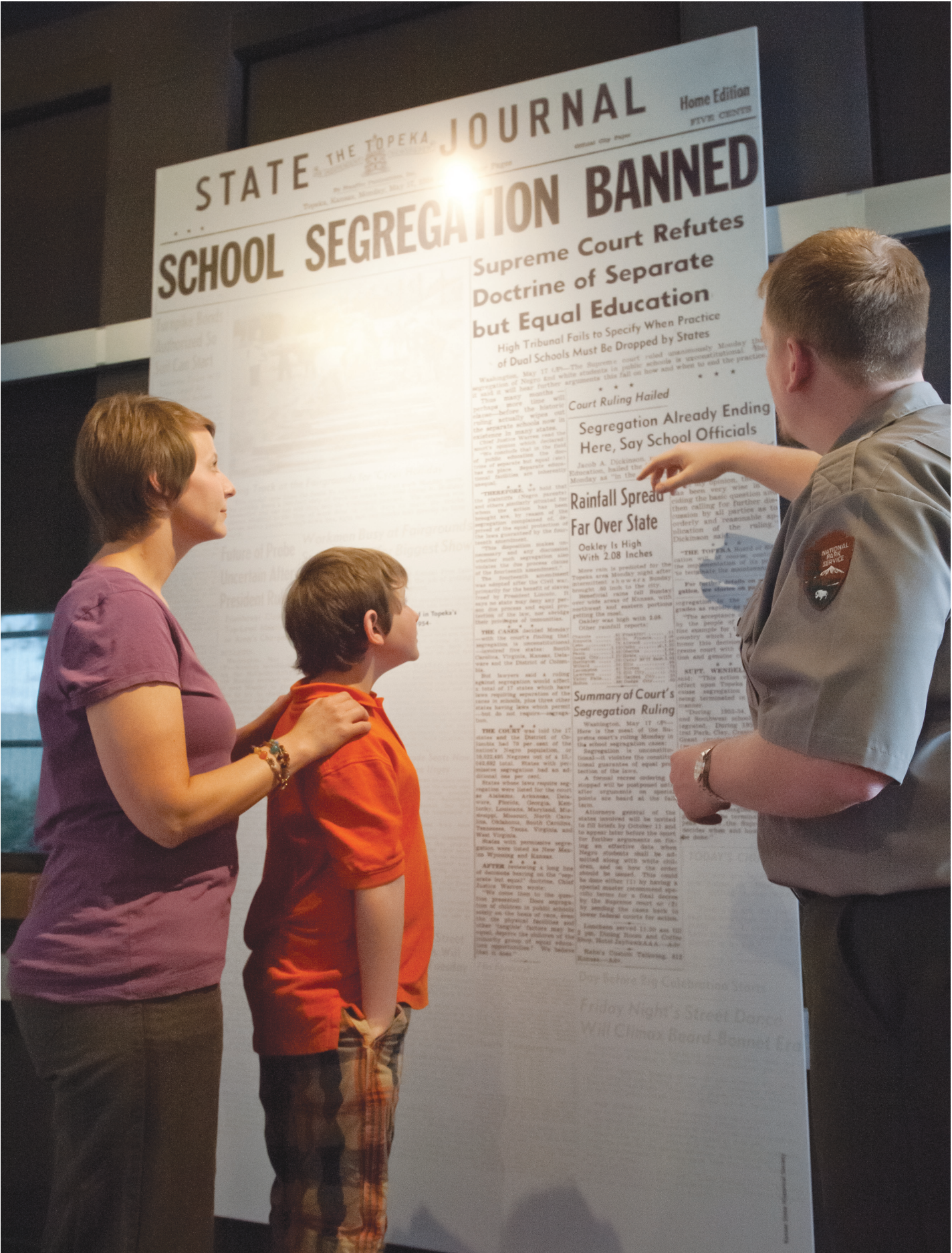
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site (BRVB)

Long-Range Interpretive Plan





**Brown v. Board of Education
National Historic Site (BRVB)
Long-Range Interpretive Plan**

July 2012

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Brown v. Board of Education
National Historic Site

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Inset Photo courtesy Gary Jones
**Park ranger providing individual
interpretation about the *Brown*
decision.**

From the Superintendent

National parks are created to preserve our past, to tell us about ourselves, and to inspire us. Parks may offer us a picture of what has gone by, but this image is never static. The passage of time helps shape our opinions about events and ideas. Whereas the initial purpose of a park may have been to tell a historic story, time may come to show that the park has new and even more important roles in the life of a community. This dynamic process compels those of us charged with preserving and interpreting these important slices of the American story to give serious attention to their changing role and how we tell these stories.

This document is a reflection of how far we have come in the last decade in telling the stories relevant to Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site. It represents the combined effort of teachers, rangers, historians, and others who have been affected by the story of the desegregation of public education in the United States. It also embodies the emotions, hopes, and dreams of our park neighbors, community activists, business owners, and the scores of others who have offered their input on how staff and partners will interpret this story for another generation of visitors.

A long-range interpretive plan allows a park to reach out and reevaluate the work we do as interpreters and to suggest ways of improving how we connect with the public. The strength of a park lies in how well its staff hears and addresses the concerns of those who advocate for a park, for those who rely on it as a tool in reaching new audiences, and for those who live adjacent to the park and see it as an integral part of their community. From its inception, the park has benefited from the work of capable partners and advocates. In the park’s early years, the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research served as the park’s primary partner in interpretive and educational outreach. During that time, the Brown Foundation provided curriculum for teachers and helped sponsor special events among other important functions. With this Long Range Interpretive Plan, the National Park Service (NPS) is reaching out to a variety of new partners to help focus our energies on new audiences. This new phase presents an opportunity for the park to direct additional funds toward providing better public services, revamping many of our interpretive exhibits, and connecting with underserved populations. As the park staff begins this next phase in its logical development, the NPS owes a debt of gratitude for the crucial role played by the Brown Foundation in helping to save the Monroe School and creating Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site.

As we embark on a new decade of civil rights education, our role is not limited to telling one story. This park is also a crucial piece of Topeka and Kansas’ historical landscape. The forces that created the unique situation that led to segregation in Kansas – the battle over whether Kansas would be a free or a slave state, the role of *de facto* segregation in and around the park’s neighborhood, the economic segregation that still occurs in public education today – are all part of the *Brown*

story. Equally important are the unique cases of segregation that affected all of the litigants in the *Brown* case – the student protests in Virginia, the separate and unequal doctrine that was so apparent in South Carolina, as well as the stories of segregation in Delaware or even in our nation’s capital. Each is a compelling and motivational part of this park.

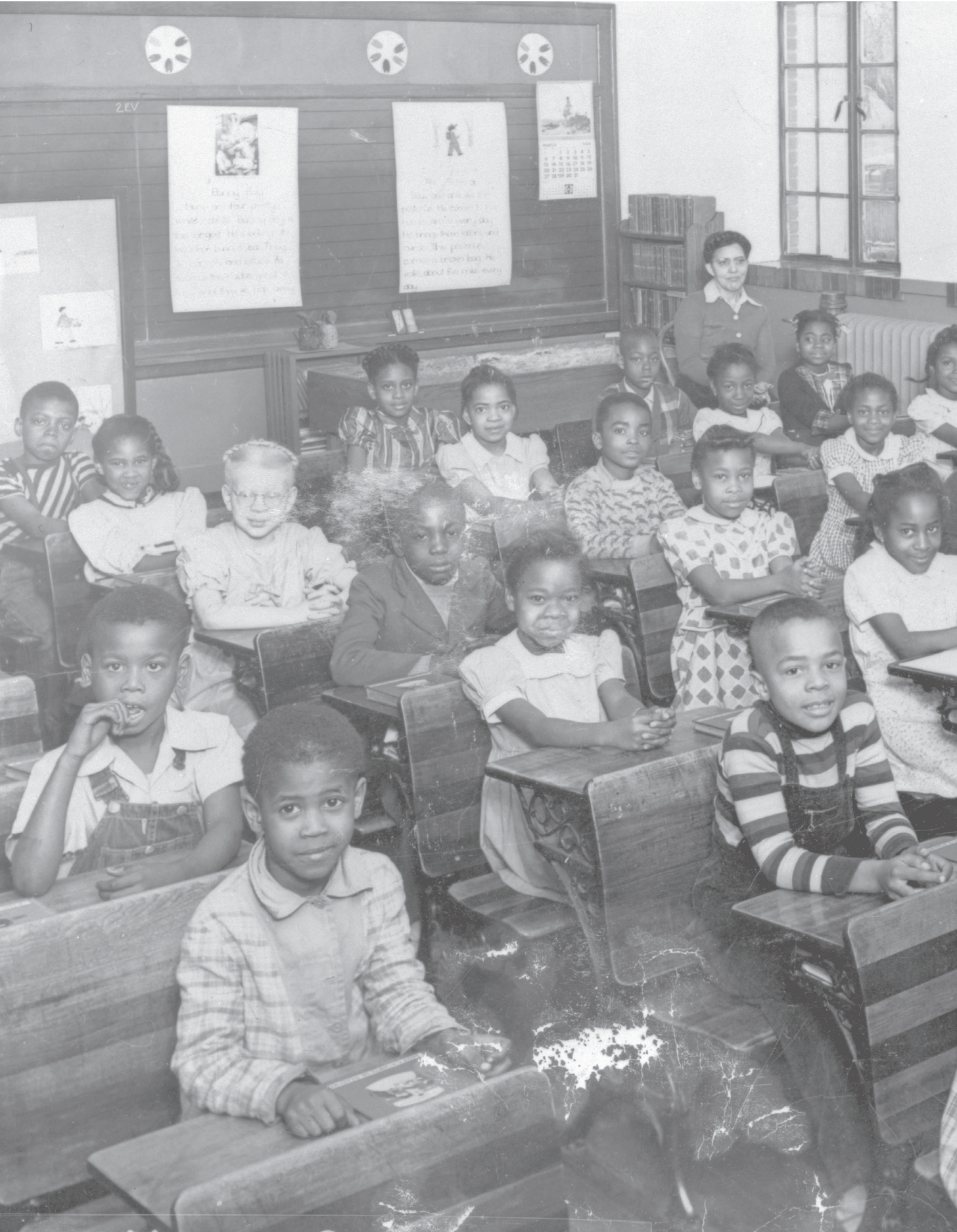
Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site has a role in telling how the battle for civil rights continues to move forward, not only in Kansas, or in the hometowns of the other litigants, but in causes and crusades all over the country and the world. It speaks to people who are striving for equality in broken schools in our urban cores, in war-torn corners of the planet, and in impoverished communities throughout the globe. This park has meaning and resonance for people in all of these communities.

Having sat in and participated in all of the planning sessions that created this planning document, I know that many of the issues that were important for me personally were also clearly articulated by our participants. Based on these sessions, the park will:

- Identify underserved groups and target products to meet their needs.
- Listen to visitors needs and help them define their desired experience.
- Incorporate park themes into all interpretive products, including site exhibits.
- Actively engage with the local community.
- Allow every citizen to make a connection with the park and claim ownership of the site and its stories.
- Significantly expand visitation and outreach.
- Make the site known as a resource to tell the civil rights story.
- Interpret the concept of equality more broadly.
- Prepare for the 2016 NPS centennial.

The staff at Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site is inspired by and dedicated to the concept of the park as a transformative force, not just for individuals, but for the surrounding community. Our neighbors have shared that they often want more from the site than they are presently receiving. They want to understand the role of the park in their lives, how it might help children receive a better education and how it helps them connect with their natural surroundings, and in ways that go beyond simply learning the history of the civil rights movement. As a result, the park has made a significant commitment to creating a Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) that builds on and is informed by the wishes and needs of the community. The LRIP process therefore has involved a great deal of civic engagement and dialogue with the community. This dialogue will continue to have a role in managing and planning in the park in the future. This plan is a reflection of our commitment to civic engagement and an invitation to continued and active community dialogue in helping to shape the park’s future.

David Smith
Superintendent
Brown v. Board of
Education National
Historic Site
July 2012



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*We conclude that, in the field of public education,
the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place.
Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.*

--U.S. SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN, MAY 17, 1954



Photo courtesy Library of Congress

NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund civil
rights attorneys who argued
Brown, on the steps of the U.S.
Supreme Court.

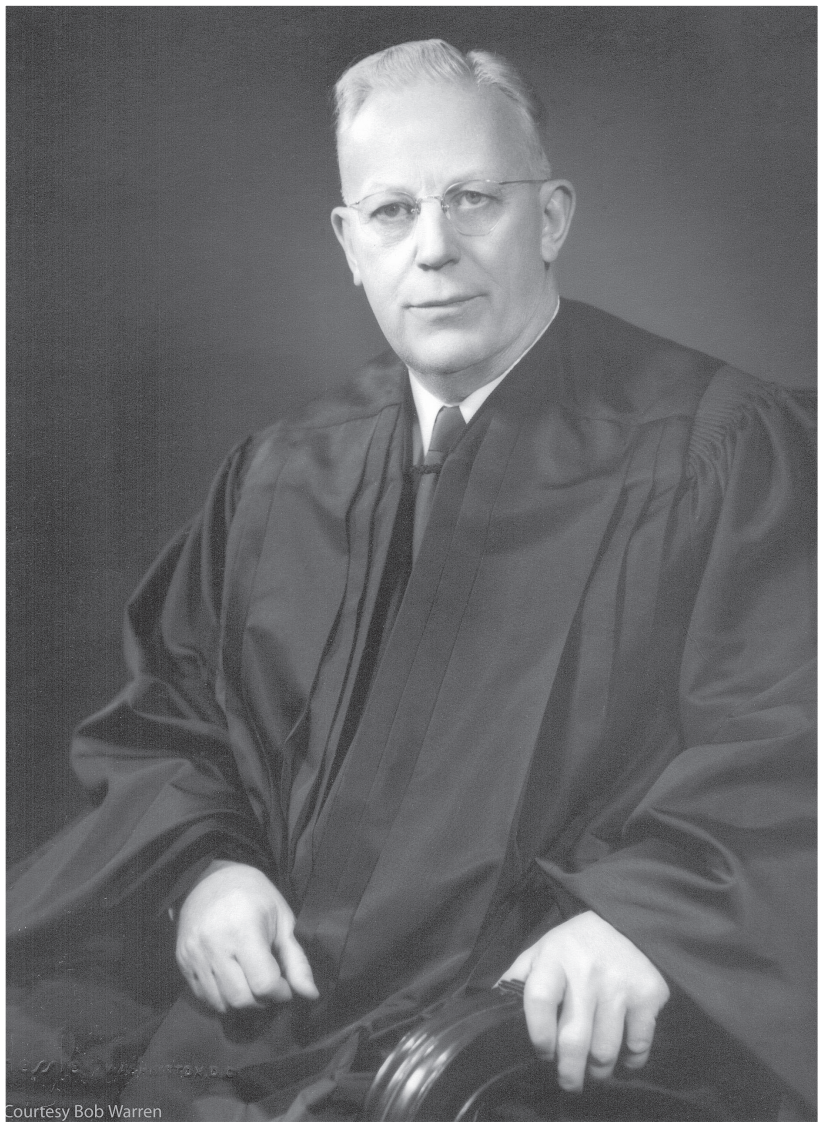
Brown v. Board of Education was a turning point in American history. The U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in 1954 declared that separate public schools based on race were unconstitutional. But the ruling was more than a legal decision determining a point of law. The *Brown* decision became a rallying cry—a shout from the rooftop that all Americans were citizens. All were to be guaranteed equal protection of the law. Non-violent resistance to segregation through a budding civil rights movement emerged after the *Brown* decision.

Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site became a unit of the national park system in 1992. The site, which includes the historic Monroe School and adjacent grounds, commemorates the decision that ended segregation in public schools throughout the nation. In May of 2004, on the 50th anniversary of the decision, the park opened to the public. After nearly a decade of observation of visitation and programming, the time is ripe to create a long-range vision for the park’s interpretive and educational programming.

A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance Program, *Teaching the Movement*, gave an “F” to the state of Kansas (and many other states) for their ineffectiveness in teaching about the civil rights movement. The report, issued in September 2011, provided the perfect opportunity to launch a

planning process intended to enhance teaching about that very subject. As planning continues at the park, participants will address how Topeka, the state of Kansas, and perhaps the whole nation, can do a better job of “teaching the movement,” in part with the help of Brown v. Board of Education National Historical Site.

Chief Justice Earl Warren felt strongly that the U.S. Supreme Court needed to issue a unanimous decision in *Brown*.



Courtesy Bob Warren



The Ritchie House and Constitution Hall are related resources the park interprets as a part of Topeka’s civil rights story.

The Long Range Interpretive Plan

The Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) shapes plans for the future.

The National Park Service (NPS) has adopted a unified planning approach for interpretation and education. This approach combines planning for interpretive media, personal interpretive services, and education programs. The Long-Range Interpretive Plan is the basic planning document for interpretation and was formally adopted as part of NPS guidelines in 1995. Responsibility for creating the LRIP lies with each park’s superintendent.

The planning process helps parks make practical, goal-driven choices. The LRIP defines the overall vision and long-term (five to seven years) interpretive goals of the park and articulates realistic strategies and actions that work toward achieving those goals. While it considers past interpretive approaches, the LRIP is primarily a forward-looking document that concentrates on actions needed to create or sustain a vigorous and effective interpretive program for the future.

The long-range interpretive planning process features two phases. First, the foundation phase articulates significance, themes, and target audiences. It also includes a review of existing conditions. The second phase of the LRIP process recommends interpretive services, media, and partnerships for the site, looking ahead to the next five to seven years.

An Implementation Plan divides the recommendations into achievable steps.

Enabling Legislation

This section presents a brief narrative describing the park’s enabling legislation.

A copy of the park’s enabling legislation is included as Appendix A.

Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site (NHS) was established in Topeka, Kansas, on October 26, 1992, by Public Law 102-525. The site, which includes the historic Monroe School and adjacent grounds, commemorates the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that ended segregation in public schools throughout the nation. The legislation permits the park to develop cooperative agreements with private and public agencies, organizations, and institutions within or beyond Topeka to further the park’s mission. These partnerships are meant to ensure that the full story of the events that preceded and followed the historic U.S. Supreme Court decision will be told.

Purpose

Park purpose statements describe why a site was set aside and what specific purposes exist for it.

The purposes of Brown v. Board of Education NHS, as quoted from the park’s enabling legislation, are to:

- preserve, protect, and interpret for

Ranger and kids with protest signs



the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the places that contributed materially to the landmark United States Supreme Court decision that brought an end to segregation in public education;

- interpret the integral role of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in the civil rights movement;
- assist in the preservation and interpretation of related resources within the city of Topeka that further the understanding of the civil rights movement.

inspiration of present and future generations, the people, places, and events that contributed to the landmark United States Supreme Court decision that outlawed segregation in public education. Furthermore, the site interprets the integral role of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in the civil rights movement, preserves the former Monroe School and cultural landscape, and assists in the interpretation of related local, national, and international resources that further the understanding of the civil rights movement.

Mission Statement

The mission statement describes what the park does.

Brown v. Board of Education NHS interprets, for the benefit and

Vision Statement

The vision statement tells why the park does what it does. It describes the mission goals.

- The vision of Brown v. Board of Education NHS is to:
- Present an accurate and faithful interpretation of the story of *Brown v. Board of Education* and its role in the civil rights movement and contribute to the continuing dialogue on these issues.
 - Provide the opportunity for people to make emotional and intellectual connections to the meanings and significance of the *Brown v. Board of Education* story and the civil rights movement through site visitation and outreach programs.
 - Work together in a spirit of cooperation that embodies the National Park Service’s Core Values (Respect, Integrity, Excellence, Shared Stewardship, and Tradition) in daily activities and interactions.
 - Practice the highest standards of public service, public safety, and be diligent stewards of the resources that are entrusted to us.
 - Partner with those who effectively contribute to and share in the park’s mission and vision.

Statements of Significance

Park significance statements describe what is distinctive about the combined resources of the park. The statements can reflect natural, cultural, scientific, recreational, and inspirational values, as well as other aspects. These statements summarize the importance of the park to the nation’s natural and cultural heritage.

Brown v. Board of Education NHS is significant to the nation because:

The Case of the Century. *Brown v. Board of Education* declared the doctrine of “separate but equal” in the nation’s educational system unconstitutional by overturning the precedent set in 1896 by *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

A Right Guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision affirmed the Constitutional right of all U. S. citizens to equal protection under the law as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Legacy and Impact. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision represents a crucial turning point in the American civil rights movement by establishing a legal precedent for dismantling other forms of legalized segregation in the country, which led to new opportunities for African Americans and other minorities to achieve equality not only in education, but in housing, employment, and many other realms.

Kansas and the struggle for equality and freedom. From the struggle over the expansion of slavery during the “Bleeding Kansas” era before the Civil War, to the U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*, to conflicts over the civil rights of other groups such as gays and lesbians, the people of the state of Kansas have been witness to the foundation of fundamental paradigm shifts in the national struggle for equality.

Tragic Prelude
(1938-1940) by
John Steuart Curry



Primary Interpretive Themes

Primary interpretive themes embody the most important ideas or concepts communicated to the public about a park. They convey the significance of the resource, and highlight the links between tangible elements, intangible meanings, and universal concepts that are inherent in the park’s resources. The themes connect resources to larger processes, systems, ideas, and values, and emphasize the relevance of park stories. They define the core content of the educational messages the park offers, and serve as the building blocks upon which interpretive services and educational programs are based. Subthemes identify the stories – potentially infinite in number — that can be told as part of each theme.

Primary interpretive themes, including some subthemes/stories, for Brown v. Board of Education NHS are:

1. The Brown v. Board of Education decision by the U.S. Supreme Court was the culmination of a century of

personal struggles and legal battles in the fight to achieve racial equality in the United States and continues to influence the everyday lives of Americans today. The focus of this theme is on the “Road to Brown” and the case itself, and it is intended to convey the significance of the “case of the century” as the result of the efforts of many people.

STORIES / SUBTHEMES INCLUDE:

- The Brown v. Board of Education decision was the culmination of a decades-long legal strategy spearheaded by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to end racial segregation in American society.
- The struggle for equal educational opportunities for African Americans began as early as 1849 in Roberts v. The City of Boston, illustrating the central role education plays in the African American experience.
- The U.S. Supreme Court shaped race relations throughout

SECTION 1 OF THE
FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT
TO THE UNITED STATES
CONSTITUTION:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.



Courtesy Library of Congress
Charles Hamilton Houston, “The Man Who Killed Jim Crow,” was the architect of the legal strategy to overturn the “separate but equal” doctrine that culminated in Brown v. Board of Education.

American history, from the infamous Dred Scott decision in 1857 to Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 and to the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954, paralleling the nation’s shifting attitudes toward race as America became a global superpower.

- The Brown v. Board of Education decision declared that the “separate but equal” doctrine in public education was unconstitutional because segregation denied students the equal protection of the law as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

2. The Brown v. Board of Education decision provided the legal, social, moral, and philosophical underpinning for the major civil rights actions later taken by citizens and the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government, establishing a landmark precedent that continues to inform debate over the meaning of equality. The focus is on the subsequent impact of the case, and the theme is intended to convey its legacy.

STORIES / SUBTHEMES INCLUDE:

- The Brown v. Board of Education decision set the stage for the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s (which featured boycotts, sit-ins, freedom riders, marches, non-violent demonstrations, etc.) by providing a legal precedent for resistance and action that resulted in executive orders and federal



Park rangers work with children to explore the park's major interpretive themes.

laws expanding the protection of civil rights.

- *Brown v. Board of Education* and the *Brown II* mandate of desegregating schools with “all deliberate speed” met with a variety of responses throughout the country, with many in the South engaging in massive resistance to the ruling.
- *Brown v. Board of Education*’s emphasis on equal protection has inspired generations of activists seeking to expand protections for other classes of citizens (gay and lesbian rights, ethnic and religious minority rights, Native American rights, etc.).
- The U.S. Supreme Court continues to play a key role in defining and securing equality and diversity in America’s classrooms and public institutions, as evidenced by numerous U.S. Supreme Court cases like *Parents Involved in*

Community Schools v. Seattle in 2007 and *Fisher v. University of Texas* in 2012.

- From desegregation to busing to magnet schools, the order to desegregate the nation’s schools resulted in 60 years of U.S. Supreme Court decisions affecting countless communities that elicited responses ranging from peaceful to litigious to violent.

3. The Monroe Elementary School reflects the excellence of all-black schools in an educational system in Topeka that implemented racial segregation in elementary schools, representing the conflicted attitudes and policies toward African Americans that have characterized Kansas from its bloody entry into the Union as a free state to its adoption of permissible segregation laws. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision grew out of Kansas, a state that was deeply involved in the national struggle for freedom and equality from the 1850s to the 1950s. The focus of the theme is on the unique history and culture of Kansas, and it is intended to convey that significance.

STORIES / SUBTHEMES INCLUDE:

- The *Brown v. Board of Education* class action lawsuit that originated in Kansas played a unique and strategic role in the NAACP strategy to end racial segregation across the nation by including permissible segregation laws and relatively equal facilities that focused the legal question more squarely on the inequality of segregation *per se*.

- Nearby sites in Topeka, including Constitution Hall, the Historic Ritchie House, Post Office/Old Federal Building, and surrounding neighborhood (Ritchie’s Addition) preserve sites linked to the story of the nation’s evolving views of race and freedom for African Americans from enslavement to full equality.
- Lawyers, judges, and activists in Kansas played key roles in the national debates surrounding race in America. (For example, John Brown and John Ritchie’s operations on the Underground Railroad; the Scott family law firm litigating desegregation cases for decades before *Brown v. Board of Education*; and Judge Walter Huxman and social psychologist Louisa Holt’s findings in the Kansas case were quoted extensively in Chief Justice Earl Warren’s opinion.)

4. The local communities that initiated the five court cases comprising *Brown v. Board of Education* experienced significant consequences as a result of the movement to desegregate the nation’s public schools, reminding us of the costs as well as the benefits involved in the national fight for equality and racial integration. The focus of this theme is on the local communities and their experiences. It is intended to convey the significance of the “case of the century” and its history and legacy, as well as inspire audiences through the stories of personal sacrifices made for the greater common good.



US Post Office and former Federal Building where *Brown v. Board of Education* was argued in 1951.



Photo courtesy Kansas State Historical Society
Elisha Scott, path-breaking prominent attorney in Topeka whose sons argued the *Brown* case in Topeka.

A variety of interpretive subthemes about *Brown* allows for a wide range of opportunities to create meaningful connections for park visitors.

Courtesy Library
of Congress

In 1964, Linda
Brown, Ethel Louise
Belton Brown,
Harry Briggs, Jr.,
and Spottswood
Bolling, Jr.,
met for a press
conference at the
Hotel America,
representing four
of the five
communities
involved in *Brown*



STORIES / SUBTHEMES INCLUDE:

- The court order to desegregate public schools with “all deliberate speed” had nationwide consequences that varied in the five communities involved in the litigation, ranging from basic compliance in Kansas to massive resistance in Virginia and South Carolina.
- African American institutions and communities that emerged and evolved through the era of slavery and segregation were challenged, transformed, and lost as desegregation unfolded in the five communities associated with *Brown v. Board of Education* as well as the nation at large.
- The five communities associated with *Brown v. Board of Education* – Topeka, Kansas; Wilmington, Delaware; Washington, D.C.; Clarendon County, South Carolina; and Prince Edward County, Virginia – shared a connection to the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision,

but the plaintiffs, attorneys, defendants, and community activists in each location encountered distinctive experiences throughout the case’s history and its legacy.

- The experiences of the five communities associated with *Brown v. Board of Education* were representative of the many ways the conflict between those seeking to maintain racial segregation and those seeking to end segregation were played out.

5. *Brown v. Board of Education* inspires the celebration of our common humanity and reminds us that engaged citizens, whether they are students, parents, teachers, lawyers, or judges, can move a nation—and the world—toward equality and justice for all. The focus of this theme is on inspiration and a call to action.

STORIES / SUBTHEMES INCLUDE:

- The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision’s impact was international, from its delivery during the height of the Cold War to its inspirational influence on the South African Constitution and other human rights struggles around the globe.
- Stereotyping, discrimination, prejudice, and xenophobia are aspects of human nature that endure across national and cultural boundaries.
- Individual actions by engaged citizens, whether through art, culture, law, or politics, can foster a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity on local, national, and international levels.

Audience Segments

The basis for categorizing audience segments for the interpretation and education program lies in whether or not a particular audience requires communication in a way that is distinct from that of the general park audience. Factors to consider include the life experiences of the individual or group, level of education, learning styles, language, cultural traditions, time available for interaction, and others.

- **General audience.** This includes individuals, families, drop-ins, tourists: anyone who walks in the door on an average day. This audience also includes:
 - Those with “enhanced needs” that can be met through adaptive programming and universal design standards.
 - Special interest groups, local civic/community organizations,

professional groups looking mainly for social interaction, religious/faith-based groups, groups focused on specific topics (like civil rights, Underground Railroad, etc.).

- **School groups/curriculum-based groups.** Includes 4th, 5th, and 7th graders (where Kansas history is usually taught), high school, college and law students, home school students, National History Day students, after-school enrichment programs, summer camps; any group whose needs are based in curriculum requirements.
- **Education professionals.** Includes teachers seeking in-service training and helping BRVB with curriculum development.
- **Youth organizations,** such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.
- **Local audience:** BRVB neighbors



Park ranger-led
kite program for
local students.

- and all Topekans, including special events audiences.
- **Virtual audiences.**
 - **Cultural tourists:** groups looking to learn more about the African American experience.
 - **“Passport stampers,”** who should receive at least minimal interpretation as part of their brief visit.
 - **Four other communities,** in addition to Topeka, associated with *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Desired Visitor Experiences

Statements of desired visitor experiences describe how the park’s interpretation and education program facilitates intellectual, inspirational, emotional, and physical experiences for visitors. These statements describe what visitors to the park would like to learn, feel, do, or experience when visiting the park (either in person or remotely).

Visitor experience objectives for BRVB are:

- Visitors will learn how the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision came about through the interpretation and implementation of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- Visitors will understand how the *Brown* decision served as a catalyst in propelling the United States toward equal rights for all citizens.
- Visitors will comprehend the injustices endured by African Americans over the course of this nation’s history.
- Visitors will have the opportunity to listen to first-person accounts of the cases and hear about the effects

- on peoples’ lives.
- Visitors will have the opportunity to interact with artifacts or reproduction school items of the *Brown v. Board of Education* period and engage in activities within Monroe School, the site’s most important and authentic artifact.
 - Visitors will understand the sacrifice African Americans made in the five communities involved in the class action lawsuits due to the *Brown* decision to end school segregation.
 - Visitors will be emotionally moved, agitated, and challenged by the actions of ordinary Americans who helped change unfair laws.
 - Visitors will be moved to positively confront inequities and discrimination once they leave the park.
 - Visitors will leave able to see both subtle and explicit examples of segregation and discrimination that have confronted their fellow citizens as they search for equality in education and other basic needs.
 - Visitors will have the opportunity for dialogue about civil rights issues and equality in education – if they so choose.
 - Visitors will have the opportunity to play an active role in helping to shape the story through their own experiences. Every community member will feel comfortable coming forward to tell his/her own stories.
 - Visitors will develop an increased sense of stewardship from their experiences at the park that will carry on to other parks in the national park system.

Issues and Influences

This section includes influences and opportunities inside and outside the park, resource-based issues, and internal issues that affect interpretation and education. Collectively, it reflects the perspectives of Brown v. Board of Education NHS upper management, as well as staff members and stakeholders.

- BRVB is more story-driven than object/site driven. Significant artifacts hold inherent symbolism and power. A collection of *Brown v. Board of Education* related materials – perhaps ordinary items made special through their association with the famous case and the people who were involved in it – would deepen and enrich interpretation of that story.
- Be aware of the need for continuous updates in interpretive methods to meet the needs of new and evolving audiences through time. Content should continually be updated and made relevant. BRVB exhibits, among the most technically sophisticated within the NPS system, are nevertheless seen by some people as static, relying extensively on technology, and imparting an overwhelming amount of information.
- Keep the use of technology appropriate. Avoid “technology for the sake of technology.” People want visceral experiences that engage their hearts and souls, no matter the method of delivery.

Some BRVB stakeholder issues center specifically on ways in which BRVB can make a difference in the community, one of the site’s management goals. Like the BRVB court case, the

- site can be an agent of change in the community (as well as nationally and globally). Suggestions included:
- Form a coalition of cultural organizations that can work together with Visit Topeka and the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce to promote programs in a coordinated way, such as the community arts and culture activity calendar (<http://topeka365.com>); help create a strategic destination plan for Topeka.
 - Create a “Youth Leadership” organization to advise BRVB on young peoples’ interests. Convene regular get-togethers over pizza to discuss current civil rights issues. Allow students to fulfill community service obligations by participating.
 - Convene a meeting like the stakeholder workshop every one-two years to hear community input. Report to that group how/which ideas have been implemented, and seek new directions.
 - Extend the interpretive experience into the Topeka neighborhood, in keeping with one of the site’s stated purposes: “assist in the preservation and interpretation of related resources within the city of Topeka that further the understanding of the civil rights movement” – a “*Brown* Heritage Experience” akin to Boston’s Freedom Trail.
 - Create a “BRVB-mobile” to take the *Brown v. Board of Education*/ongoing struggle for civil rights to the schools.
 - Work with Topeka Police Department on diversity and racial profile training.

The Setting

Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site (BRVB) is located at 1515 SE Monroe Street, in the former Monroe School that was originally one of four segregated elementary schools for Topeka's black children. The school closed in 1975. The neighborhood in which the park is located is a few blocks southeast of downtown Topeka. The neighborhood includes residences, light industry, small businesses, and vacant lots. Although the neighborhood was spruced up a bit for the 2004 opening, which was attended by President George W. Bush, the area has not seemed to benefit economically in a significant way by the presence of the park. The presence of a federal institution in the neighborhood, however, does lend an element of safety and security, even though the park does not have law enforcement rangers assigned to it.

Park History

The history of the park could be said to have its roots in 1985, when Justice Warren Burger, former Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, called upon the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a survey of properties associated with the U.S. Constitution. *Brown v. Board of Education* was among the sites identified. In 1988, members of the family of lead plaintiff Oliver Brown and other community members created the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and



Research, an organization intended not only to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, but also to create a catalyst for public conversation about the impact and significance of the historic case. In 1990, the Brown Foundation rallied the community to support the preservation of Monroe School, listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1991, and Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site (NHS) was established in Topeka, Kansas, on October 26, 1992, by Public Law 102-525. The site opened to the public in 2004 on the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The Brown Foundation slowly transitioned from its role as both an advocacy group to get the park established and an educational organization that helped provide much of the park’s educational and interpretive outreach in the park’s early years, but remained the park’s most visible partner. As the NPS began to amass a staff capable of interpreting the park’s story, Brown Foundation staff was tasked with bringing in special groups for programs as well as producing curriculum for classroom use.

In 2011, park management began expanding formal partnerships with a number of new community groups in the hopes of connecting with even more potential users. This has meant reaching out to representatives of the other cases involved in the original Brown decision. It has also meant the establishment of new relationships with local and state historical

societies, tourism groups, and other area parks. An expanding culture of partnership is enriching the services provided by the park staff as well as allowing educators and rangers to reach new untapped audiences. Preparation of this plan has led to new partners with whom the park can collaborate in the future. Working with a variety of partners will enrich the diversity of audiences that will benefit from the park’s interpretive and educational programming. In the meantime, the NPS has developed new partnerships with other groups involved in the original court case as well as other local historical civil rights groups.

The park is emphasizing its educational programming. Hiring an education specialist and educational technicians has been an important step in this direction. The park also is beginning to make better use of volunteers. The park’s volunteer coordinator established an Artist in Residence program that will use local artists to work with the public and area youth. Additionally, the park has brought on a number of new volunteers to help with staffing the front desk and aiding with student programs.

The LRIP civic engagement process offered the park the opportunity for a fresh start in the Topeka community, as well as an opportunity to clarify confusion about the Brown Foundation’s role versus that of the National Park Service. With park staff taking a more active role in the educational, interpretive, and outreach operations at the site, management has

had the opportunity to partner with a much larger audience.

The Audience

Although the park is identified as an attraction on the nearby interstate highway, as well as at several places within Topeka, attendance hovers below 20,000 annually in a “market shed” of easily one million people in nearby metropolitan areas. In its first year (2004) the park greeted more than 22,000 visitors, but attendance has dwindled since then, to fewer than 17,000 in 2011. Total attendance includes about 6,000 students each year. College classes from Washburn University, Kansas University, Kansas State University, Emporia State University, and Haskell Indian Nations University also visit. Visitation is at its greatest in July, while the winter months of December and January see the lowest number of visitors.

General visitors are (anecdotally, no formal study has been done) about 20% African American, with the rest “typical” park visitors, especially seniors. Black-oriented tourism groups, such as African American cultural history tours, have started to promote BRVB.

Information and Orientation

Brown v. Board of Education NHS is well supported by directional signs, both on the Kansas Turnpike (Interstate Highway 70) and in urban Topeka. The “Visit Topeka” tourism website features “*Brown v. Board*” as the top “must see” attraction in the



city. The park’s own website offers good driving directions from the north, south, east, and west, although there is no map showing its location. The website also features a floor plan of the public areas of the site, along with a suggested “itinerary” for accessing it.

The Interpretive Experience

VISITOR EXPERIENCE. Virtually all visitors arrive by private automobile. Parking at the site is adequate. The park is located on a regional bike route. Although relatively unused, the Class 1 Bike Lane offers a potential to pull in some biking traffic. Also, the park is served by local transit. The site is open every day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., closing only on Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. Visitors enter through the school’s front door (on the east side) where they are greeted by a park ranger. The foyer of the building displays simple, to-the-point panels that explain in brief what the park is about. From that point, visitors experience the rest of the site on their own. The former

LRIP Core Team discussing the results of the public stakeholders meeting.

school auditorium now features an elaborate set of video programs – five different segments – that set the scene for how *Brown v. Board of Education* came about. The video program is entitled *Race and the American Creed*. The space is vast, with screens all around the room at ceiling height, with comfortable, couch-like seating throughout the darkened room.

Three exhibit spaces are open to visitors, all on the first floor, and each displayed in a former classroom. (An elevator has been installed, but the second floor is currently closed to the public.) *Education and Justice* interprets the background of *Brown v. Board of Education* through photos, exhibits, and interpretive media including seven short videos. Among the most effective exhibits is the “Hall of Courage” – an intense series of filmed encounters that reflect the violent reaction to the idea of federally mandated integration in many parts of the country. *The Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education* includes exhibits on the impact of the decision, while *Expressions and Reflections*, in the school’s former kindergarten room, provides a place where visitors can share their experience of the site via various kinds of media. A recent accessibility study has resulted in some suggestions for improving accessibility for all visitors. The park is currently engaged in implementing those recommendations. This includes revamping the lighting and sound systems, as well as the addition of a tactile map.

Exploration of a small but extremely

well-stocked bookstore, operated by Western National Parks Association, rounds out the typical visit.

SPECIAL EVENTS. In the park’s early years, the National Park Service and the Brown Foundation co-sponsored a program series that featured temporary exhibits and public programs. As an example of park programming since then, the park offered a film festival for Black History Month in February 2012 that featured ground-breaking films that dealt with race relations, including *Remember the Titans*, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, *The Princess and the Frog*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. About 300 people attended a special Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday event in 2012 that included screenings of two PBS American Experience films on the civil rights leader, along with children’s activities and a trivia game with prizes. Regularly scheduled temporary art exhibits feature local artists of a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

EDUCATION PROGRAM. At one time, the interpretation and education divisions were separate. This has since been remedied, and the consolidated interpretive and educational division is working more smoothly. Expanding curriculum-based educational opportunities has been a goal of the park.

Two different educational packets—one aimed at middle school and high school students and the other for lower elementary age students—have been developed. These include printed material, CDs, and DVDs.



The park’s education specialist will work with teachers to produce new curriculum materials.

Webquest, an online research program for use on site or in the classroom is available for grades 6-8. A short video, *Fair is Fair*, was produced for younger children to introduce the concept of equality and civil rights. Jeopardy and Bingo games that teach about *Brown v. Board of Education* are available for classroom use. A recently developed, grant-funded Junior Ranger booklet has been well received.

Traveling trunks are available for use on site or in the classroom. The trunk for elementary students is based on a 1950s school room, and includes playground games like jump ropes, jacks, and marbles; oral history

interviews about what school was like in the mid-20th century, and period school books like the “Dick and Jane” readers.

The trunks for 4th, 5th, and 6th grade address 1950s material culture, with costume elements for a historian, an archaeologist, and an anthropologist. Students take on the role of each and use the artifacts in the trunk to explain 1950s American culture.

A play, *Now Let Me Fly*, was commissioned for the site’s opening, and was performed at the site and elsewhere. Washburn University holds the copyright, but the play is still regularly and successfully performed by area students. The play dramatically presents some of the stories and personalities that made *Brown v.*

Living history programs offer an alternate way to present the park’s interpretive themes.

Board of Education possible.

Distance learning is available through the Great Plains Network. Local universities have experimented with multi-point video conferencing, which can permit representatives of the *Brown v. Board of Education* cases and other speakers from around the country to connect all on the same internet “bridge.” The park has offered two different lessons through point-to-point distance learning. One, for middle school through college, is on political cartoons that address segregation from the 1920s to today. The one for 4th and 5th grade takes the form of a debate about the issues. The programs are scripted, require a trained moderator, and have been offered 5-6 times per year.

BRVB is also featured in online lesson plans produced by *Teaching With Historic Places*, a National Register program that offers classroom-ready lesson plans on properties listed on the Register.

NEARBY HISTORIC SITES. A number of sites with related historical themes are located within a fairly easy walking distance of BRVB.

The 1856 *Historic Ritchie House*, the former home of abolitionists John and Mary Jane Ritchie operated by the Shawnee County Historical Society, is about five blocks away from BRVB. Ritchie sold land to African Americans looking for a new start after the Civil War, leading to creation of the predominantly

black neighborhood known as Ritchie’s Addition in which the park is located. In the past, the Ritchie House has been involved in creating a history walk between the site and BRVB during which six re-enactors, including two BRVB rangers, acted out various periods and events in the struggle for equal rights as visitors walked the path. The society, an all-volunteer organization, has worked with Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area in developing their stories. They do not own a collection, but rely for resources on the excellent nearby Kansas State Historical Society. Although underfunded like many local historical societies, the organization does a good job articulating the ideas behind the quest for equality.

Constitution Hall is a stone vernacular National Register Building, built by antislavery Kansas pioneers in 1855 and currently under renovation, that was once the site of the Free State Constitutional Convention. It served as Kansas’ original statehouse from 1861 until 1869. The Friends of Constitution Hall hope to open the building to visitors in 2012 with temporary exhibits in the raw interior space. They hope eventually to host art shows, create a garden in a space next door, and partner with other local organizations in using the space productively.

The Courtroom in the U.S. Post Office/Federal Building. Room 321 of Topeka’s Federal Building was the actual courtroom where the final

appeal for integration of Topeka’s schools was denied, sending the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, where *Brown v. Board of Education* was eventually decided. Many features of the room are intact, needing only furniture typical of courts of the period to represent the setting for the historic case. The room is not used much now, except for occasional training sessions for employees in the building. The room, which is on the third floor, can be made readily accessible to the public.

PERSONNEL

In addition to the superintendent and chief of interpretation and education, who are available to participate in offering programs, the interpretation, education, and cultural resources staff consists of a historian, an education specialist, an education technician, an information technology specialist, two park rangers, and two park guides. All are full-time employees. During the summer the park will work to include seasonal park guides. As part of a policy of active recruitment, the park is working with historically black colleges and universities to identify students that would be well suited to these positions.



Recommendations

Introduction

Recommendations for Brown v. Board of Education NHS center on nine different categories of interpretive services. Each recommendation is ranked according to priority (high, medium, low), and assigned to a timeframe within that priority (short, medium, long). Short-term projects are already either underway or are being planned, and are intended to be fully operational within one year of the completion of the LRIP. Mid-term projects will be completed within a two-three year time frame, while long term projects may take from four to seven years before they are fully in place. The categories are:

1. Onsite personal services
2. Onsite educational programs
3. Offsite educational programs
4. Offsite outreach (non-educational)
5. Onsite exhibits
6. Special events/traveling exhibits
7. Media
8. Accessibility
9. Interpretive infrastructure

In general, priority recommendations emphasize opportunities for dialogue, creation of curriculum-based educational programming, and the highlighting of community outreach. New programs are combined with existing ones to reinforce the role of BRVB as a city and statewide — if not national — catalyst for conversation about human rights. A new emphasis on the experiences of Topekans and Kansans strengthens the park’s ties with the

Cultivating the park’s strong education programs will remain a key priority.

immediate community, while inspiring visitors from all parts of the world. BRVB is moving confidently ahead, toward a future of partnerships, meaningful discourse, and new connections.

Summary of highest priority recommendations

High priority recommendations in each category include:

Onsite personal services. Staff will be trained in the dialogic tour approach, which encourages every tour participant to become actively involved in discussion and analysis of the issues in a safe, mutually respectful setting.

Cooperating association. Western National Parks Association, the cooperating association for the park, will continue to sell educational and interpretive products for park visitors. Seen as an extension of the park’s interpretive operation, the WNPA sales manager and park staff will continue to seek new products that relate to park themes. WNPA will continue to be a supportive and collaborative partner to the park’s overall interpretive program.

Onsite education. The park will work with teachers to develop targeted curriculum materials. Existing community-based programs like the Williams Science and Fine Arts Magnet School after-school program, bus grants, and Kite Day will continue, while a new one-week summer program for children will combine learning about civil rights with visiting public lands. The park seeks to create a dialogic approach for educational groups.

Offsite education. Existing programs, including distance learning, National History Day, and getting park rangers into classrooms, will be upgraded. Summer activities for community children will be added. And specific curriculum based on the stories of people in Topeka (and, when appropriate, in the other four communities) involved in and affected by *Brown v. Board of Education* will be developed as part of outreach to local schools.

Offsite outreach (non-educational). Regular community dialogue sessions are planned. The park will engage with the community, high schools and colleges, and the local police force to promote diversity training. Existing community outreach programs, such as the recent Topeka Public Library-based listening sessions and interpreting partnerships with the Ritchie House and Constitution Hall will not only continue, but will be strengthened and enhanced. Finally, the park will begin to participate in the Kansas Book Festival, which offers activities for children along with author readings and book signings.

Onsite exhibits. High priority plans for exhibits focus on a concept plan for adjustments to the existing exhibits that will improve visitors’ experiences and enhance their connection with primary interpretive themes and sub-themes. There will be a new emphasis on the stories of Topekans and their involvement in the famous court case. One of the park’s interpretive themes emphasizes all five communities involved in *Brown v. Board of Education* and new exhibits will communicate that theme, too.

Interpretive infrastructure

High priorities in support of the interpretive program include an oral history program, possible use of a bus from Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, and professional development for interpretive staff. The small bus will be used to transport students and youth groups to and from the park and other relevant destinations, to transport visitors engaged in living history walks from the Historic Ritchie House, and for special interpretive tours of the Topeka’s “Civil War to Civil Rights” historic places.

Western National Parks Association’s staff expertly provides quality visitor service.



Recommendations for Onsite Personal Services

HIGH PRIORITY. The park will add an important initiative that will provide a more relevant way for staff to interact with visitors, including both school groups and members of the general public. Staff will offer visitors who wish to participate the opportunity to engage in dialogic tours. This

Special events. Well regarded existing events that the park has done in the past will continue, such as naturalization ceremonies, and the living history program with the Ritchie House. New events will include a traveling exhibit and associated event centered on the Buffalo Soldiers, or black troops in the U.S. Army in the 19th century, as well as the Black Expo, a Topeka event that offers educational, economic, social, and cultural events to people of all races; a new emphasis on National History Day; participation in the Dream Rocket Project, a nationwide collaborative art project; and a celebration of the Mexican *Día de Los Muertos*, or “Day of the Dead.”

Interpretive Media. Some interpretive media priorities are already being addressed. An interrelated series of new media pieces will become available to interpret various locations throughout the city, highlighting important Topeka events associated with the *Brown v. Board of Education* court case. The series includes new wayside exhibits; a related cell phone tour; and a “Brown to Brown” brochure that will interpret Kansas’ civil rights history, from John Brown to *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Accessibility. Studies underway have indicated the high priority need for changes to lighting and sound management in the park’s exhibit galleries. The National Park Service’s Harpers Ferry Center is at work on these modifications at the time of this writing.

approach immerses visitors into the stories using dialogue to enhance interpretation. It requires the presenter to step back from the role of fact provider in order to facilitate dialogue and create a safe environment for the exchange of diverse points of view. Formal training will be necessary for all BRVB interpretive staff, as the facilitation of such dialogue must be handled with a great deal of skill. It requires careful and extensive preparation. Because of the training time involved to prepare the full staff to succeed with this approach with a variety of audiences, the time frame for this initiative to be implemented is two to three years. While the park will offer dialogic tours, this approach will probably not be used for the majority of the park’s personal interpretive services.

MEDIUM PRIORITIES, MID-TERM TIME FRAME. Two new initiatives for personal interpretive services are recommended, also in the two-to three-year time frame. The first ties in with plans for dialogic tours, and involves regularly scheduled formal interpretive programs for members of the visiting public that will take place on site using the dialogic approach. For the second, BRVB rangers will partner with the nearby Ritchie House to offer tours at that site to school groups and special tour audiences.

MEDIUM PRIORITY, LONG-TERM. BRVB will explore the possibility of incorporating living history approaches to programming for onsite educational programs and the general public. Staff members or paid or volunteer

actors would impersonate actual historical or fictional composite figures who have been involved in the battle for equal rights, engaging audiences in dialogue about their times and struggles. Such programs require careful planning and attention to detail, and could be in place within 4-7 years.

Recommendations for Onsite Educational Programs

HIGH PRIORITY. The highest recommended priority for onsite educational programs is to create educational experiences that meet the curriculum needs of teachers. (The dialogic tour is one approach that this initiative may take.) In addition to staff training and preparation, work groups composed of local teachers will develop curriculum at the upper elementary, middle, and high school levels. The first group was launched in 2012. This priority could lead to the park forming a teacher advisory group.

A second high priority is a summer camp for youth that will combine learning about civil rights with visits to public lands. This initiative was launched in summer 2012.

MEDIUM PRIORITIES. Teacher workshops are already offered by the park, but significant upgrades to their format and content are recommended. The workshops must not only address curriculum standards, but also how resulting materials are to be used in the classroom. An increasingly popular model,



developed by the Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History, involves teacher seminars that rely on a variety of sources, including access to subject matter experts, to increase teachers’ content knowledge. Based on what they learn in the seminars, the teachers develop their own curriculum materials. There are many good matches between teachers’ need for content knowledge and BRVB resources.

The park will also explore the possibility of stronger, more comprehensive curriculum offerings for home-schooled student groups. These groups present particular challenges due to the wide age range of the participating students.

Both these medium-range priorities will be launched in a mid-term time frame of two to three years.

Recommendations for Offsite Educational Programs

HIGH PRIORITY. The highest priority recommendation for outreach programs to the schools is the

development of Topeka-specific curriculum to be presented to grades 4-12. This is a pressing, short-term need for which planning will begin immediately. This could include a listing or “menu” of available lesson plans that have been developed specifically for teaching about civil rights. Possible avenues to pursue include using the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program or working with area teachers in small work groups to develop new curriculum materials.

BRVB has already begun partnering with Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area to offer a new summer day-trip program for at-risk 4th through 6th grade youth in Boys and Girls Clubs in Topeka, Lawrence, and Kansas City. The program, funded by a \$10,000 impact grant from the National Park Foundation, takes up to 200 students on five-day trips to visit heritage sites with “Civil War to Civil Rights” themes, where they engage in dialogue about slavery, freedom, segregation, and the ongoing struggle for human rights.

Three other high priority recommendations build on existing

Vibrant living history programs with park partners have a strong impact on the understanding of the area’s history for today’s youth.

programs. The first involves National History Day (NHD). NHD, which invites 6th to 12th grade students to create presentations in five categories, has long been an honored tradition in Kansas, with many students actively involved. BRVB has immediate, short-term plans to participate with the program more fully.

Distance learning programs for grades 4-12, traditionally offered to schools more than an hour’s travel from the park, are also a high priority recommendation with many opportunities for strategic partnering. A cost benefit analysis will be conducted to determine the relative effectiveness of addressing one class at a time in person, as opposed to a live program to multiple schools at once. Distance learning programs are conducted using internet-based video conferencing technology. The update to this program will be launched within a mid-term time frame of two to three years.

Finally, the BRVB staff will work with area teachers to provide curriculum-based programs tied to onsite visits that include after-visit follow-ups in the classroom with a ranger. This, too, is a mid-term time frame project that will be in place within 2-3 years.

HIGH PRIORITY EXISTING PROGRAMS. Many onsite educational programs that are already in place remain high priority items. These include:

- Bus grants to facilitate school group visits (long-term time frame).
- The site’s annual Kite Day, during which students from nearby

Williams Science and Fine Arts Magnet School enjoy a day on the playground flying kites.

- The Families Empowered by Additional Teaching of Students (FEATS) program in partnership with Williams Magnet School and the YWCA. FEATS targets children at low-performing schools living in poverty, providing healthy snacks, exercise, literacy, and educational enrichment programs. Williams School students began participating in an after-school program at BRVB during the 2011-2012 school year.
- A broader-based after-school homework program for neighborhood children beyond the FEATS program participants is under consideration, but remains a lower priority for the park.
- There is a high priority, immediate (short-term) need to improve the existing reservation system for elementary school visits.

MEDIUM PRIORITIES. Medium priorities for offsite educational programs include implementing a new Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program for teachers of grades 4-12.

Another priority for the park is an initiative to create a mock trial program that would invite middle, high school, and/or college students to reenact some of the trials involved in the *Brown v. Board of Education* court case. The mock trial program could possibly take place in the actual federal building in Topeka where one of the court cases was tried. This project will take

some time to put in place, and is a long-term (four to seven year) goal.

Another medium priority involves the living history program mentioned above. A living history program recently developed in partnership with the Ritchie House was a success. Enhancement of that program in the next two to three years will be a first step toward the more fully realized living history program at the BRVB site that is a long-term goal of the park.

LOWER PRIORITY. A statewide art contest for students in grades 4-12, developed in conjunction with the Kansas Department of Education, will be explored as a possible long-term goal for the park. The art would interpret global civil rights issues from all time periods.

Recommendations for Offsite Outreach (Non-educational)

HIGH PRIORITY, SHORT-TERM. Community members will see an immediate impact of BRVB’s high priority commitment to outreach. Three existing programs will be enhanced and reinforced, while a new commitment will begin in September 2012.

- Listening sessions in the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, which were initiated as part of the civic engagement element of the long-range interpretive planning process, will continue on a regular basis.
- BRVB is exploring new ways of partnering with the Shawnee

County Historical Society to enhance joint interpretation of civil rights issues.

- BRVB began partnering with the Friends of Constitution Hall to enhance interpretation of this important Kansas landmark for visitors to downtown Topeka.
- BRVB will participate in the Kansas Book Festival, which is held in September at the Kansas History Museum. Partners include the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Western National Parks Association, and Kansas First Lady Mary Brownback, who visited BRVB during a program to promote literacy.

HIGH PRIORITY, MID-TERM. BRVB is committed to working with area law enforcement professionals to promote diversity training and understanding, especially with regard to racial profiling. The program is expected to be in place within two to three years.

MEDIUM PRIORITY. A critical outcome of the LRIP process was recognition of the need for the park to work more closely with the four other communities involved in the *Brown v. Board of Education* lawsuit: Wilmington, Delaware; Washington, D.C.; Clarendon County, South Carolina; and Prince Edward County, Virginia. While service to and recognition of the role of Topekans is an immediate need, broadening interpretation to embrace these other communities is also a priority. This initiative involves two approaches, both of them with the involvement and participation of

representatives of each of the four communities. One, interpretation of these sites at BRVB will be enhanced. Two, BRVB will work with the four communities to develop interpretive and educational products and programs, which could include a web presence to interpret the full story, including virtual tours of each of the sites.

Recommendations for Onsite Exhibits

HIGH PRIORITY. After eight years of using and interacting with BRVB’s array of exhibits, it is time to rethink and repurpose some aspects of these installations. Public input gained during the LRIP process generated some good direction for enhancing the effectiveness of the park’s exhibits. An Exhibit Concept Plan has been contracted that will address the visitor experiences of school groups, members of the local community, and general audiences. BRVB will begin implementation of the Exhibit Concept Plan as soon as it is completed. The plan will also include consideration of the best use of the second floor of the building.

In the meantime, the park has the opportunity to install a treasured object in the current exhibits. During the 1940s, Kenneth and Mamie Clark designed a study to test the effects of segregation on black children by using black and white dolls. The results showed a negative self image among black children that the researchers linked to segregation. The park received one of the dolls

used by Dr. Clark in his tests. It will be incorporated into a permanent exhibit, perhaps in conjunction with a variety of dolls of different ethnicities stored in one of the gallery drawers, that children could take out, play with, and think about — with some interpretation to prompt discussion.

MEDIUM PRIORITY. Participants in the planning process suggested that interpretation at the site would be enhanced through the use of hands-on interpretative objects. This strategy will be considered as part of the Exhibit Concept Plan.

In addition, participants asked site staff to consider an approach to interpreting the lawsuit that would involve each visitor “adopting” the identity of an individual who was involved in or impacted by the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. This approach was first presented by the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and has become a mainstay of personalized interpretation. The visitor receives an identity card or driver’s license that provides some facts about that historical individual’s experience. The character’s experiences are then tracked through the visitor’s experience of the exhibits. QR codes could be used to enrich available background information about the character, and the stories could extend to future generations of that person. The program would need to address stories that have already been made public. The pictures of people currently in the Auditorium might represent some candidates

for this program, but there are many persons with very compelling stories available. Visitors could choose a good “match” demographically, in order to have someone whose characteristics are similar to their own.

Recommendations for Special Events and Traveling Exhibits

HIGH PRIORITY. BRVB staff has planned for development or participation in a number of existing new special events and programs that will be launched within a year of completion of the LRIP. They are:

- Create a traveling exhibit and related living history event that interprets the black troops of the U.S. Army. The project will be developed in partnership with Fort Scott National Historic Site and the Kansas Historical Society.
- Participation in Kansas Black Expo, an event that offers information about jobs and services, and includes a parade in downtown Topeka.
- National History Day
- The Dream Rocket Project, a nationwide art project
- Celebration of *Dia de Los Muertos*, or the Mexican “Day of the Dead.”

The popular living history program that features characters representing various civil rights struggles will continue as a high priority in partnership with nearby Ritchie House. Students and special events audiences encounter the characters



as they walk between the Ritchie site and BRVB. The Lecompton Players, a well known local acting group associated with Constitution Hall State Historic Site in Lecompton, Kansas, may participate as well.

Performing naturalization ceremonies for new American citizens at BRVB is a high priority and will continue.

MEDIUM PRIORITY. A new program that was put in place was an Artist in Residence program. Through this program local artists will work with BRVB staff to develop arts programming centered on civil rights issues.

A special event centered on the history of the Underground Railroad in Kansas will be developed in the two to three year time frame. In addition, BRVB wants to work with black reenactor groups to create a living history project in that same time frame. Over the long term – four to seven years – BRVB will develop

The park will continue to partner with artists to provide interactive programs for students and visitors.

Park rangers collaborate with military personnel for educational programs for students.



a signature annual event – to be determined – that will call attention to the park’s programs throughout eastern Kansas and beyond.

To increase visitation from people in the area, using more student and community art displays is recommended. These displays should deal with civil rights, as well as local and state history.

To better advertise a signature park event and other events, it is recommended that getting information to religious institutions and multicultural organizations (such as Hispanic and Native American organizations) in Topeka would benefit the park.

LOWER PRIORITY. Previous lecture series programs have not been well attended, with the exception of one on Topeka basketball and basketball players, which was very popular.

Previous programs on John Brown have also been successful. This type of programming may be enhanced by engaging local schools to participate in choosing lecturers and topics. Military-based programs, especially on the Buffalo Soldiers, may be of interest, particularly if they build on the connection that Buffalo Soldiers once served as the first park and backcountry rangers at Yosemite National Park. Programs should work not only to increase audience size, but also its diversity, and should build on other successful events.

A long-term goal for BRVB is to bring representatives of all five *Brown v. Board of Education* communities together for a special event.

Recommendations for Interpretive Media

HIGH PRIORITY. The highest priority interpretive media project to be recommended is already under development. It consists of three interrelated elements that will serve an important park purpose: “to assist in the preservation and interpretation of related resources within the city of Topeka that further the understanding of the civil rights movement.” The elements include new wayside exhibits onsite as well as in the community, a cell phone tour interpreting the sites, and a “Brown to Brown” brochure that interprets Kansas’ civil rights story from John Brown to *Brown v. Board of Education*. Partners for this effort include Shawnee County Historical Society and Constitution Hall.

MEDIUM PRIORITY, MID-TERM TIME FRAME (2-3 YEARS). With the media project completed, the site will explore a number of new media initiatives:

- A BRVB traveling exhibit on civil rights issues.
- A BRVB newsletter that will go both to the Topeka community and the larger NPS community.
- New podcasts to be added to the website.
- A new Web Ranger program that incorporates all other NPS sites with civil rights stories to tell.

Existing programs to be updated and enhanced include:

- Partnering with *Visit Topeka* to develop public relations and marketing initiatives aimed at attracting new visitors to the site. The site will develop a Media/Public Relations Plan that will allow for more and better communication to the community about BRVB initiatives and programs. For example, the superintendent might produce a regular column, blog, or television or radio show. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) should be consistently broadcast on local radio. Other contacts to explore as part of a media plan include Patch Online, the Kansas Press Association (especially for coverage in smaller area newspapers), and partnering with Washburn University’s communications department for possible volunteer services.
- Building on social media platforms to reach the web community.

- Developing additional multilingual translations of existing media.

MEDIUM PRIORITY, LONG-TERM. BRVB will explore a long-term project to create an e-tour of all five *Brown v. Board of Education* communities, to be presented via the Park’s website. The project will include the development of a media database for all of the communities.

LOWER PRIORITY. A long-term project involves presenting each visitor with a post-visit postcard, inviting them to mail the card back to the park indicating when they have done something to further the cause of human rights. The postcards would be displayed at the park.

Recommendations Regarding Accessibility

HIGH PRIORITY. In April 2009, two staff members from the National Center on Accessibility (NCA) spent three days at BRVB completing an accessibility assessment. This assessment entailed a physical and programmatic study intended to identify access deficiencies and to prioritize and expedite the appropriate corrective actions as required under federal disability legislative mandates. Key findings and recommendations are available as Appendix B to this document. High priority mitigation is already underway at BRVB. New lighting and sound plans are being put in place, not only to support the ADA community, but to improve the visitor experience for all. Museum lights created a glare on some text and



A mixture of delivery methods to impart park information to visitors adds to the task of addressing the impact of accessibility concerns.

graphic panels, making them difficult to read, and sound bleed is an issue in multiple locations throughout the exhibit galleries.

MEDIUM PRIORITY. With improvements to the lighting and sound environments in place, the next priority is the development of large print brochures for sight impaired visitors (within one year of completion of the LRIP). Assistive listening devices and audio descriptions of video presentations will be installed in two to three years.

Recommendations for Interpretive Infrastructure

HIGH PRIORITY. Interpretive infrastructure refers to all the support systems and resources that make possible an outstanding program of interpretation. It includes staff training and professional development, access to research materials, access to image and sound files, and interpretive objects such as props, costumes, replicas, and equipment.

Two new high priority initiatives are:

- Begin planning to upgrade and build on the existing oral history collection. Not only is there a critical need to capture the reminiscences of people who were involved in *Brown v. Board of Education*, but previously recorded histories need to be more accessible if they are to support research. In addition, an expanded oral history project will collect stories related to important features of post-*Brown* life in the Topeka area that will be important in future interpretation of the park’s themes.
- Begin planning for the use of a bus from Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve that can be used for school groups and for local tours of historic sites.

Professional development of interpretive staff is also a high priority, particularly in light of new dialogue-based programming.

MEDIUM PRIORITY. A great number of resources have been gathered at the site since its opening, but the material is not well organized. It is located in several different locations throughout the building, and is not indexed nor catalogued so as to make it readily accessible for use by the interpretive staff. Organization and sorting of this material has begun, and continues to be an important step toward program support.

Lower priority. Staff will explore the possibility of making a database of primary source documents regarding *Brown v. Board of Education* available for virtual visitors.

Implementation Plan

Interpretive Service	Existing or New?	Time Frame: Short-term (within 1 yr) Mid-term (2-3 yrs) Long-term (4-7 yrs)	Priority within time frame (High Medium Low)	Theme(s) Addressed	Audiences Served	Funding	Status	Existing or Potential Partner(s)
ONSITE PERSONAL SERVICES								
Dialogic tours	New	Mid-term	High	All	Onsite ed, gen pub	ONPS	Explore	Museum of the New South
Scheduled formal interpretive programs	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	All	ONPS	Begin planning	
NPS-led Ranger tours, Ritchie house	New	Mid-term	Medium	3,4,5	School groups, spec tours	ONPS	Explore	Shawnee Co. Historical Scty.
Living History	New	Long-term	Medium	All	Onsite ed, general pub	ONPS	Explore	
ONSITE EDUCATION								
Dialogic Tours	New	Short	High	All	Students and teachers	ONPS	Ongoing	Trainers
Teacher Work Groups	New	Short	High	All	Teachers	ONPS	Planned	Local teachers
Summer Camp activities for youth	New	Short	High	All	Local under-served	NPF and ONPS	Ongoing	FFNHA and NPF
Williams Afterschool	Existing	Short	High	All	Local children	ONPS	Ongoing	Williams ES
Improve educational group reservation system	Existing	Short	High	N/A	All student groups	ONPS	Planned	
Homeschool	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	Children and parents	ONPS	Exploring	
Teacher Workshops	Existing	Mid-term	Medium	All	Teachers	ONPS	Planned	Schools
Bus grants	Existing	Long-term	High	N/A	Schools	ONPS	Ongoing	Schools
Kite Day	Existing	Long-term	High	N/A	Williams ES	ONPS	Ongoing	Williams ES
After-school homework	New	Long-term	Low	5	Local children	ONPS	Exploring	PTA and schools
OFFSITE EDUCATION								
Topeka-specific curriculum	New	Short	High	All	Education 4-12 grades	ONPS	Begin planning	Teachers in area

Recommendations

Interpretive Service	Existing or New?	Time Frame: Short-term (within 1 yr) Mid-term (2-3 yrs) Long-term (4-7 yrs)	Priority within time frame (High Medium Low)	Theme(s) Addressed	Audiences Served	Funding	Status	Existing or Potential Partner(s)
OFFSITE EDUCATION (continued)								
National History Day	Existing/new	Short	High	All	Education 6-12 grades	ONPS	Begin planning	Students in grades 6 to 12
Distance learning broadcasts	Existing/new	Mid-term	High	All	Education 4-12 grades	ONPS	Begin planning	HOME, GRCA, Great Plains Network, <i>We the People</i>
NPS park rangers in schools	Existing/new	Mid-term	High	All	All students	ONPS	Ongoing	Area teachers
Summer youth days	New	Mid-term	High	3,5	Topeka kids	ONPS	Begin implementation	FFNHA Boys and Girls Club
Teacher/Ranger teacher	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	Teachers, students 4-12 grades	ONPS	Explore	NPS T-R-T program
Living history	Existing/new	Mid-term	Medium	1,3,5	School groups, special groups	ONPS	Ongoing	
Mock trial	New	Long-term	Medium	1,4,5	School groups grades 7-12	O NPS	Explore	Area teachers, Mr. Charles Scott, Jr.
Student statewide art contest	New	Long-term	Low	3,5	Education grades 4-12	ONPS	Explore	KS Dept. of Ed
OUTREACH (non-educational)								
KS Book Festival	New	Short-term	High	3,5	People who can read in Kansas	ONPS	Began planning	WNPA, First Lady, Library
Topeka and Shawnee Country Public Library Outreach	Existing/new	Short-term	High	All	Local	ONPS	Ongoing	TSCPL
Historic Ritchie House, Shawnee County Historical Society	Existing/new	Short-term	High	3	Historical	ONPS	Exploring	SCHS
Constitution Hall in Topeka	Existing/new	Short-term	High	3	Local historical, downtown pedestrians	ONPS	Began planning	Friends of Constitution Hall
Diversity Training Outreach	New	Mid-term	High	All	Local area – esp. LE	ONPS	Exploring	Area law enforcement
Host regularly scheduled focus groups	New	Mid-term	High	All	Local	ONPS	Exploring	

Recommendations

Interpretive Service	Existing or New?	Time Frame: Short-term (within 1 yr) Mid-term (2-3 yrs) Long-term (4-7 yrs)	Priority within time frame (High Medium Low)	Theme(s) Addressed	Audiences Served	Funding	Status	Existing or Potential Partner(s)
OUTREACH (non-educational) (continued)								
Work with 5 communities for web and virtual tours	New	Mid-term	Medium	4	Ed groups and 5 communities	ONPS	Exploring	Moton Briggs Delaine
Increase interpretation of other BvB sites	Existing/new	Mid-term	Medium	4	Ed groups and 5 communities	ONPS	Exploring	Moton Briggs Delaine
Lunch time “Brown Bag It” series	Existing/new	Mid-term	Medium	All	Local	ONPS	Ongoing/exploring	
Community outreach with civic groups	Existing	Mid-term	Medium	5	Local	ONPS	Ongoing	Many
Bus tours	New	Long	Medium	3,5	Local	ONPS	Exploring	
BRVB parade float	New	Long	Low	TBD	Local	ONPS	Exploring	
ONSITE EXHIBITS								
Concept Plan	New	Short	High	All	All	ONPS	Under contract	
Implement concept plan	New	Short	High	All	All	Staff time	Will begin after Concept Plan	
Doll installed in exhibit	New	Short	High	1,2,4,5	On-site visitors	ONPS	Under development	
Purpose of 2nd floor	New	Short	Med/High	NA	Community/Ed	ONPS	Not developed	TSCPL
Visitor ID	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	On-site visitors	ONPS	Not developed	5 communities
Interp Objects/Hands On Items	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	On-site visitors, children	ONPS	Not developed	Teachers, groups
EXHIBITS AND SPECIAL EVENTS								
Black Troops Traveling Exhibit/Living History Event	New	Short	High	3	Diverse, children, students	ONPS	Under development	FOSC, KHS
Black Expo Labor Day	New	Short	High	All	Local and diverse	ONPS	Planned	Local black group

Recommendations

Interpretive Service	Existing or New?	Time Frame: Short-term (within 1 yr) Mid-term (2-3 yrs) Long-term (4-7 yrs)	Priority within time frame (High Medium Low)	Theme(s) Addressed	Audiences Served	Funding	Status	Existing or Potential Partner(s)
ONSITE EXHIBITS								
National History Day	New	Short	High	All	Students	ONPS	Explored	Schools and history groups
Dream Rocket	New	Short	High	All	Students/ Adults	ONPS	Planned	Dream Rocket Project coordinator
Dia de los Muertos (“Day of the Dead”)	New	Short	High	3,5	Mexican-Americans	ONPS	Planned	Mexican-American community
Naturalization ceremonies	Existing	Short	High	5	Diverse	NA	Planned	District Court
Living History Walks: Ritchie House to BRVB	Existing	Short	High	3	Students and spec events audience	ONPS	Planned	SCHS, Lecompton Players
Artist In Residence	New	Short	Medium	All	Local artists	ONPS	Planned	Local art groups
Lecture Series	Existing	Short	Low	All	Local and academic, students	ONPS	Explore	Schools
UGRR Special event	New	Mid-term	Medium	1,5,3				
Signature Annual Event	New	Long	Medium	All	Students, Local community	ONPS	Explore	Many
Special event with the 5 Communities	New	Long	Low	4	TBD	ONPS	Explored	5 Communities
MEDIA								
Waysides	New	Short	High	All	Onsite/ community	ONPS	Under develop- ment	SCHS, Constitution Hall
“Brown to <i>Brown</i> ” Brochure of Topeka sites	New	Short	High	All	Topeka Community, travelers	ONPS	Under develop- ment	SCHS Constitution Hall
Cell phone tour	New	Short	High	All	Topeka community, travelers	ONPS	Under develop- ment	SCHA, Constitution Hall
BRVB Traveling Exhibit	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	Offsite	ONPS	Explore	
BRVB Newsletter	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	Onsite, com- munity, NPS community	ONPS	Explore	
Podcasts for website	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	Web com- munity	ONPS	Under develop- ment	
Web Ranger	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	Web students	ONPS	Explore	All other NPS Civil Rights sites
Multi-lingual media	New	Mid-term	Medium	All	Non-English- speaking visitors	ONPS	Explore	

Recommendations

Interpretive Service	Existing or New?	Time Frame: Short-term (within 1 yr) Mid-term (2-3 yrs) Long-term (4-7 yrs)	Priority within time frame (High Medium Low)	Theme(s) Addressed	Audiences Served	Funding	Status	Existing or Potential Partner(s)
MEDIA (continued)								
Pub relations/market	Existing/ new	Mid-term	Medium	All	New visitors	ONPS	Ongoing	Visit Topeka (CVB)
Media database	Existing/ new	Mid-term	Medium	All	Staff, NPS, NHD	ONPS	Explore	
Social Media	Existing/ New	Mid-term	Medium	All	Web com- munity	ONPS	Ongoing	
E-tour	New	Long	Medium	All	Web com- munity	ONPS	Explore	
SB for all 5 communities	New	Long	Medium	All	Outreach and onsite	ONPS	Explore	5 communities
After visit postcard project	New	Long	Low	All	Onsite	ONPS	Explore	
ACCESSIBILITY								
Light Plan	New	Short	High	NA	All onsite visitors, ADA community	ONPS	In progress	ADA com- munity, HFC
Sound Plan	New	Short	High	NA	All onsite visitors, ADA community	ONPS	In progress	ADA com- munity, HFC
Large print brochures	New	Short	Medium	NA	Vision impaired visitors	ONPS	Under develop- ment	ADA com- munity
Tactile school exterior and floor plan	New	Mid-term	Medium	NA	All onsite visitors, vision impaired	ONPS	In progress	ADA com- munity
Assistive Listening & audio descriptive	New	Mid-term	Medium	NA	Hearing impaired	ONPS	Under develop- ment	ADA com- munity
INTERPRETIVE INFRASTRUCTURE								
Oral History Collection	New	Short	High	All	Elderly staff and visitors	ONPS	Began planning	
Use of NPS bus from TAPR	New	Short	High	All	School, local, historical	ONPS	Began planning	
Professional development of interpre- tive staff	Existing/ new	Short	High	All	Staff	ONPS	Began planning	
Update BRVB park library	Existing/ new	Mid-term	Medium	All	Staff and public	ONPS	Began planning	
Database of primary source documents	New	Mid-term	Low	All	Virtual visitors	ONPS	Exploring	



PUBLIC LAW 102- 525 [S.2890]: October 26, 1992

BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

For Signing Statement of Act, see Statement for P.I. 102- 525 in U.S.C.C. & A. N. Legislative History Section.

An act ot provide for the establishment of the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in the State of Kansas, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of The United States of America in Congress assembled.

TITLE 1- - BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

SEC. 101. DEFINITIONS

As used in this title- -

(1) the term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior

(2) The term "historic site" means the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site as established in section 103

SEC. 102. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.- - The Congress finds as follows:

(1) The Supreme Court, in 1954, ruled that the earlier 1896 Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson that permitted segregation of races in elementary schools violated the fourteenth amendment to the United States Constitution, which guarantees all citizens equal protection of the law.

(2) In the 1954 proceedings, Oliver Brown and 12 other plaintiffs successfully challenged an 1879 Kansas Law that had been patterned after the law in question in Plessy v. Ferguson after the Topeka, Kansas, Board of Education refused to enroll Mr. Brown's daughter Linda.

(3) Sumner Elementary, the all- white school that refused to enroll Linda Brown, and Monroe Elementary, the segregated school she was forced to attend, have subsequently been designated National Historic Landmarks in recognition of their national significance.

(4) Sumner Elementary, an active school, is administered by the Topeka Board of Education; Monroe Elementary, closed in 1975 due to declining enrollment, is privately owned and stands vacant.

(b) PURPOSES.- - The purposes of this title are- -

(1) preserve, protect, and interpret for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, the places that contributed materially to the landmark United States Supreme Court decision that

brought and end to segregation in public education;

(2) interpret the integral role of the Brown v. Board of Education case in the civil rights movement; and

(3) assist in the preservation and interpretation of related resources within the city of Topeka that further the understanding of the civil rights movement.

SEC. 103. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION: BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

(a) IN GENERAL.- - There is hereby established as a unit of the National Park System the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in the State of Kansas.

(b) DESCRIPTION.- - The historic site shall consist of the Monroe Elementary School site in the city of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, as generally depicted on a map entitled "Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site," numbered Appendix A and dated June 1992. Such map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices in the National Park Service.

SEC. 104. PROPERTY ACQUISITION.

The Secretary is authorized to acquire by donation, exchange, or purchase with donated or appropriated funds the real property described in section 103(b). Any property owned by the States of Kansas or any political subdivision thereof may also acquire by the same methods personal property associated with, and appropriate for, the interpretation of the historic site: Provided, *however*, That the Secretary may not acquire such personal property without the consent of the owner.

SEC. 105. ADMINSTRATION OF HISTORIC SITE.

(a) IN GENERAL.- - The Secretary shall administer the historic site in accordance with this title and the laws generally applicable to units of the National Park System, including the Act of August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535), and the Act of August 21, 1935 (49 Stat. 666).

(b) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.- - The Secretary is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with private as well as public agencies, organizations, and institutions in furtherance of the purposes of this title.

(c) GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN.- - Within two complete fiscal years after funds are made available, the Secretary shall prepare and submit to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the United States House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate a general management plan for the historic site.

SEC. 106. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated \$1,250,000 to carry out the purposes of this title including land acquisition and initial development.

Accessibility Assessment for Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site
Key Findings & Recommendations

Assessment date: April 6, 2009 – April 8, 2009

In April 2009, two staff members from the National Center on Accessibility (NCA) spent three days at the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, completing a physical and programmatic accessibility assessment. This report outlines the key findings and recommendations found during the assessment. The purpose of this report is to identify access deficiencies to NPS facilities and programs in order to prioritize and expedite the appropriate corrective actions and recommendations required under the federal disability legislative mandates.

Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 requires that buildings and facilities that are designed, constructed, or altered with Federal funds, or leased by a Federal agency, comply with Federal standards for physical accessibility.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended states that people with disabilities cannot be denied the benefits of or be excluded from the participation in programs, services and activities. Section 508 requires that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others specifically as it relates to electronic and information technology.

Referenced Documents Used for Site Assessments and Recommendations

The following documents have been used based on the legislative mandates to which the National Park Service must adhere regarding accessibility for people with disabilities:

- Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 as amended (U.S. Access Board, 2004; General Services Administration, effective date May 8, 2006).
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1978, Section 504 (program access), Section 501 (employment), Section 508 (electronic and information technology, which includes video and multimedia, web sites, computer kiosks, etc.)
- NPS Director’s Order #42: Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs and Service
- National Park Service Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media
- NPS Audio-Visual Accessibility Initiative for Visitors with Disabilities D24(2420) (October 20, 2006)

In addition to legislative mandates, the NCA assessment team has made recommendations based on best practices in the field to create greater opportunities for participation and benefit among visitors with disabilities:

- Principles of Universal Design
- Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design
- Web Accessibility in Mind. (n.d.). *Seizure Disorders Introduction*. Retrieved May 19, 2009, from WebAIM Web Site: <http://www.webaim.org/articles/seizure/>
- EZ Access. (n.d.). Retrieved May 20, 2009, from <http://trace.wisc.edu/handouts/ez-intro/>
- Reich, C. (2006). *Universal Design of Computer Interactives for Museum Exhibits*. Retrieved May 19, 2009, from Museum of Science Boston Web Site: <http://www.mos.org/exhibitdevelopment/access/index.html>

The following report is a compilation of the most significant deficiencies that were identified by the National Center on Accessibility (NCA).

Key Findings and Recommendations

The scope of this project called for NCA to work with the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site to identify all of the programmatic and physical deficiencies at the site. The following narrative report provides details of the NCA assessment team’s key findings and recommendations.

Reoccurring Barriers to Physical Accessibility

Seating

Found throughout the Brown v. Board building are square, padded seats to be used as seating for visitors. There are two versions of these seats. One version which is found in the auditorium has backrests but no arm rests. The second version is just a padded cube that does not provide either a backrest or an arm rest. These are found in all of the remaining galleries. Neither of the versions of the seats is fixed within any location. They were frequently moved around in each of the galleries, mostly resulting in them being scattered in the way of where people walk, and often times eliminating the necessary clear floor space required for maneuvering. They are also placed at the computer exhibits to be used as seats, but for a visitor using a wheelchair they would have to move them out of the way to gain access to the knee clearance at the exhibits. The seats require approximately 10 pounds of operating force to move them, which creates an obstacle to gaining knee clearance and possibly may not be feasible for some visitors. NCA recommends the park add a plastic cap or felt material to the existing metal fittings on the bottom of the chairs so that they can be more easily slid across the wood floors.

There are many locations throughout Brown v Board where it would be appropriate to add fixed accessible seating as opposed to removing the cubes that are currently there.

These instances would be in all of the theatres and areas where the intention is for a visitor to sit and watch a video.

Doors

Many of the doors located throughout Brown v. Board have an operating force that exceeds the maximum allowed 5 pounds for an interior door (ABAAS 404.2.9). The park shall ensure that all doors meet these requirements. At the time of the assessment, the following doors exceeded the maximum allowed force: the resource door (10lbs), the door to Expression and Reflections gallery (12lbs), the doors to the Legacy gallery (15lbs), the door to the Education and Justice gallery (15lbs), the women's restroom (12lbs), both doors to the men's restroom (16lbs), the doors to the auditorium (15lbs) and the door to the outside adjacent to the men's restroom (23lbs).

Hardware

Located throughout the four exhibit galleries, are a series of Discover Drawers. The drawers contain either photo panels or exhibit cases with period artifacts. The hardware on the drawers cannot be easily operated with the heel of the hand or a closed fist because the gap between the handle and drawer is not large enough. There are a total of eight handles that should be replaced throughout the site. Ensure that the requirements set forth in ABAAS for operable parts are met.

Reoccurring Barriers to Program Accessibility

Publications

The primary publications for Brown v. Board of Education NHS should be available in large print, Braille, audio and electronic formats. At the time of the assessment, the primary publications were not available in any alternative formats. NPS and local resources should be identified to produce secondary publications in alternative formats upon request. Secondary publications should include the statement, "This publication available in alternative format upon request (xx days in advance)."

Include a statement in the Brown v. Board of Education NHS brochure explaining the availability of services for visitors with disabilities including information to request a sign language interpreter, audio describer, or real time captioning, along with information on the assistive listening systems, alternate formats, accessibility improvements to Brown v. Board of Education NHS and a contact number for more questions on accessibility. Also include this statement on the Brown v. Board of Education web site.

Audio Description

A self-guided tour of the site is available. No audio description is provided for any exhibits throughout Brown v. Board of Education NHS. Visitors with visual or cognitive impairments currently do not have an equal opportunity to experience the site or exhibits. Due to the nature of the history of this site, the interpretation of the subject matter is done in a very graphic and visual nature, and not through a large collection of

physical objects that can be made available for tactile examination. Therefore, access is provided through audio, computer interactives, and audio description, along with a limited amount of tactile objects. However, the park shall continue to explore other opportunities to enhance the experience at the park via hands on experience.

Audio description is the describing of something visual to someone who is blind or who has low vision by a trained individual. The specialized training that audio describers receive enables them to look at objects, scenes and landscapes, people, and actions. Audio describers provide common language descriptions in a succinct and brief manner so that most people can understand what is being described. This can be done with a walking tour, a tour of a museum, films, videos, television, and other audio/visual products, and live performing art presentations.

Audio description is professionally provided by individuals and organizations throughout the country and can be easily contracted in most states. Some national park units have audio description for museum tours, nature walks, and audio/visual productions. Audio description is required under both Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Director's Order 42, which includes any use of multimedia production.

A comprehensive audio tour system should be developed to provide visitors with a sequential experience as they visit each asset exhibit at the site. Audio guides shall be independently operated and hands-free or have a hands-free option so that visitors can explore available tactile exhibits. Transcripts of the audio tour shall be available in alternative formats. NCA recommends engaging a consultant to determine what the best approach would be for the park in creating the audio described tour (i.e. what will be included and how it will be incorporated). The park should seek guidance and recommendations from this consultant for equipment and its setup within the park. It may be possible (depending on the selected equipment and setup) to incorporate both the audio description and the portable assistive listening equipment. Equipment capable of multiple uses would minimize the burden on a visitor by not requiring multiple sets of devices and/or concern themselves with dropping off and picking up new equipment at different locations.

The following are elements that should be considered when a consultant is contracted by the park to develop an audio described tour: An introduction to each room, inclusion of content from all audio visual programs, information received from the multiple interactive computer kiosks, the content in the flipbooks and on the graphic and text panels, and also the information in the discover drawers.

Assistive Listening Systems

Brown v. Board of Education NHS offers guided tours with a Ranger or Interpreter (when staff is available). Special event programming also takes place on site. Assistive listening devices should be available for people with hearing loss to assist them in receiving the same information as other visitors on the tours or at special events. Assistive listening devices are also required for the film shown in the Auditorium. Portable assistive listening devices must be provided for visitors for guided tours or other presentations and special events. Display a sign at the information desk indicating

that the assistive listening system is available and publicize its availability through brochures, program announcements and the park website. All staff shall be trained in the use of the assistive technologies, the location of these auxiliary aids and park policy regarding interacting with people with disabilities. As stated above, the park should attempt to combine these devices with those that are being used for the audio described tour.

Qualified sign language interpreters shall be available for scheduled tours and upon request for visitors who are deaf.

Interactive Computer Kiosks

Interactive computer kiosks found throughout the galleries are all recessed into a counter, with a surrounding metal faceplate, and utilize touch screen technology. None of the screens have tactile controls nor do they have a built in assistive technology (such as screen readers) to help a person with low or no vision to navigate the exhibits independently. According to Section 508, if a product utilizes touch screens or touch-operated controls, redundant tactile input methods shall be provided. Tactile controls or keys outside of the screen that are discernable without the risk of interrupting the program functions of the computer are required. These tactile controls should also work in conjunction with a screen reader to allow for navigation of any menus and to allow for navigation of the content within the program on the computers. The Trace Center at the University of Wisconsin has developed a set of interface enhancements that can be applied to electronic products and devices so that they can be used by all people (the basic concept of Universal Design) including those visitors with disabilities (<http://trace.wisc.edu/handouts/ez-intro>). There is also a research article done by the Museum of Science, Boston that discusses the importance of Universal Design for Computer Interactives and gives an example of a tactile interface much like the one developed by the Trace Center (<http://www.mos.org/exhibitdevelopment/access/index.html>). A pdf of both resources is included on the final product cd the park is receiving.

Section 508 also requires that the information provided via these interactive computer kiosk programs be audio described. Please see the section on audio description for a more detailed description of how to accomplish this.

Tactile Exhibits

Tactile interpretation is limited in the Brown v. Board of Education school and in the exhibit rooms. Ultimately, the goal is for all visitors to benefit and participate equally in the understanding of this historic time period. Throughout this narrative there will be a few recommendations for exhibits that could be made into tactile exhibits. The park shall continue to explore these options to enhance the experience of all visitors.

Exhibit Text

The text on the exhibits and on the panels (both graphic and text) has reoccurring deficiencies. The graphic panels that reoccur throughout the four galleries are done in

the same format and layout and therefore all have the same deficiencies to note. The panels have a large photo that is typically 2/3rds the size of the panel. Under the photo is a small caption that describes the photo shown. Below that is a large serif title for the panel in black text. Below that is a red heading with a serif font that is too small. Below that is another text paragraph with a black serif font that is also too small. Exhibit text found throughout the galleries shall be a minimum of 36 point, have an accessible font (examples of accessible fonts are Arial, Century and Helvetica), and have a 90 percent contrast between the text and background. However, the size 36 point font is just a recommendation based on the approximate height of exhibit text during our visit. The park should refer to the Harpers Ferry Center guidelines on “Accessible Type by Probable Viewing Distance” for an exact type size for each individual exhibit.

In addition, the park has avoided high use of italics, and NCA recommends avoiding the use of italics when redesigning the panel text. The park should also keep in mind that the red exhibit text does not create enough of a contrast between text and the background. A resource such as the Lighthouse for the Blind would be good to consult when looking at proper contrasting colors.

An additional resource for exhibit text is the Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design.

Lighting

Lighting is a consistent problem throughout the Brown v Board galleries. The main source of light is a track lighting system that runs the full length of the gallery rooms that are angled to face the text and graphic panels along the walls and the information being provided on the angled counters. The angle of the lights on the panels cast a glare on the text making it difficult to read. In addition, the angle of the lights also cast a shadow on the text when you get up close to read it. The lighting is also inconsistent throughout the galleries – low in some places and then bright in others, which make it a difficult transition for people with low vision. According to the Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design sufficient light to read text is between 100 lux and 300 lux. The light shall also be at the same level as the light in the area immediately surrounding the text and must be uniform across the text. There are instances when the light is drastically dimmer just one photo panel over.

The recommendation is to find a way to diffuse the light so that it is more even throughout the galleries. This may involve adding additional lights or replacing the existing track lighting.

Sound

There are multiple instances throughout the exhibit galleries where sound bleed is a problem. Within the galleries, there are multiple sources of audio all playing at one time and most of them are on a continuous loop. To our knowledge, neither the walls nor ceiling are constructed of materials that would help to dampen and/or contain sound. As a result, the sound from one exhibit finds itself competing with the sound from the next

closest exhibit and so on. Each exhibit in the galleries has to be played at a volume level that is higher than its closest audio exhibit.

Two concerns arise from competing sound sources and volume levels. The first concern is the potential for the decibel levels to be too high in some locations. One of these locations is the “Hall of Courage” where the sound is contained in a corridor. A second concern is that it is much more difficult for a person with hearing loss to decipher the information being given at each individual audio exhibit if there are multiple instances of audio.

Visitor Parking and Accessible Parking

The location of the visitor parking area is across the street from the Brown v. Board of Education building. The parking area is an unmarked lot that has a maximum capacity of 75 cars. There is good directional signage located on all cross streets and in the parking area indicating that the accessible parking is located behind the Brown v. Board of Education building. Where more than one parking facility is provided on a site, the number of accessible parking spaces provided on the site shall be calculated according to the number of spaces required for each parking facility. There are 17 spaces located in the back of the building to be used by employees for a total of 92 parking spaces. At the time of the assessment there was one designated van accessible parking space located behind the building. The existing van accessible parking space shall be relocated to the opposite end of parking area and the park shall add 3 accessible parking spaces adjacent to those. The park needs to relocate the van accessible space to ensure that the spaces are located on the closest accessible route to the open and unlocked entrance of the building. As a result of the front doors being too narrow, the only unlocked side door located near the bookstore becomes the accessible entrance. The park should implement a policy stating that this door remains unlocked during normal visitor hours. The only other entrance that is guaranteed to be open during business hours is the front entrance. To bring the access routes into compliance, the two ramps located on the North and South sides of the building need handrails. These handrails shall be added along both sides of the ramps meeting all requirements under ABAAS.

Entrance and Information Desk

The front entrance doors measure only 29 inches in width, which does not meet the required minimum width of 32 inches. If the park addresses parking as stated above and creates a policy wherein visitors are able to access Brown v. Board through the side entrance during normal business hours, the front doors will not need to be brought into compliance unless they are altered or replaced. The front doors are on a power assisted operating system and the park shall ensure that the closing speed of the door is a minimum of 5 seconds.

NCA was asked to specifically assess the front access routes as the park was told they might be considered ramps. However, the running slope never exceeded 5 percent at any point for the full length of the routes and therefore is not considered a ramp. This negates the park from having to provide handrails at these access routes.

Orientation for the visitor should begin as soon as they enter the building. Due to the historic significance and complexity of the subject matter presented at Brown v. Board of Education NHS, it is important that Audio Description begin prior to the visitor’s interaction with the interpretive exhibits and displays. In conjunction with the Audio Description, a 3-dimensional tactile model of the school building would provide the visitor with an understanding of the physical structure and a tactile map of the interior of the building would provide the visitor with an orientation of the site. An example of a tactile map frequently used is a thermoform map. Thermoform maps are raised line maps made from light-weight sheets of plastic created through a machine that uses a heating process that melts it into the raised line formations. Thermoform is the commercial name for this process used by the American Thermoform Corporation (www.atcbrleqp.com/). Providing a 3-dimensional model of the school and the tactile map of the interior of the building are not intended for the exclusive use of persons with visual impairments. They represent a universal approach to site orientation as they are usable by all visitors.

Once through the front entrance doors, the visitor is in the entryway where they can stop in and gather information from a ranger at the information desk. The information counter is too high. The park shall provide a section of counter space that is 36 inches high maximum above the floor surface and that measures a minimum of 36 inches wide. This area should have signage that indicates accessibility accommodations available for visitors with disabilities, such as Audio Description and Assistive Listening Devices.

Auditorium

Across the north-south hallway and aligned directly with the entry hall is a doorway into the auditorium. Just inside this doorway (about five feet) is a baffle wall intended to block light spill into the auditorium and sound spill out of the auditorium. Mounted on the hall side of the baffle wall is the title of the show, “Race and the American Creed”. By turning either right or left we can go around this wall and enter the auditorium.

The auditorium is home to the movie, “Race and the American Creed”. This is a multi-screen video program that is open-captioned with audio. It is bolstered by a series of graphic panels of iconic images and faces from the African American history as well as five iconic sculptures.

The room is two-stories high with a balcony circling the space at the second story level. Mounted to the balcony railing are six rear-projection screens. Three televisions run along one side, facing three identical televisions that run along the other side. The televisions are mounted high, with their lower edges level with the floor of the balcony. The televisions are 6 feet by 8 feet and there is 8 foot of space between any two televisions. A seventh screen is located within the auditorium stage area. The six rear-projection televisions present two iterations of a single three-screen program. In this way, the program can be viewed wherever one stands in the auditorium. The seventh screen presents a synchronized moving collage of images complimentary to the three-screen program. All seven screens are open-captioned, but none of them are audio described. The auditorium also lacks an assistive listening system that would enable visitors with hearing loss to access the sound from the video. The way in which the

sound is amplified in the auditorium leads to a lot of sound bleed making it hard to discern the video. The park should consider providing sound cones above the seating in the auditorium to help direct the sound. These can be properly placed above the provided seating and would help to alleviate the sound bleed.

The five iconic floor sculptures correspond to the five chapters of the video. These are “How Segregation Came to Be”, represented by a face-within-a-face; “Resistance”, represented by a group of artists mannequins pushing a boulder up a hill and, presumably, over a cliff. The boulder is emblazoned with words such as slavery and segregation; “War and National Service” represented by the logo for the Pittsburgh Courier’s Double V campaign (victory overseas and at home); “Education” represented by a stairway of books; “Civil Rights” represented by a scales of justice with white artists mannequins in one side and white and black mannequins climbing into the other side to try and level the scale. These iconic sculptures were not originally intended to be utilized as tactile exhibits, but after discussion with the park staff we have been notified that visitors are using them as such. The base of the five iconic sculptures measures 30 1/2 inches in height. From the top of the base to the top of the tactile features the height is an average of 65 inches. This means that the total height of the iconic sculptures measure approximately 8 feet. To be able to fully interpret the structures an individual is best served to be able to explore the figures with two hands. This means that a forward approach would be required and currently there is not knee clearance under the bases of the structures to afford an unobstructed reach. This makes the average reach range for an adult a maximum of approximately 44 inches in height. The average reach range for a child will range from 36 inches to 44 inches in height. If the park should make the decision to allow these iconic structures to be utilized as tactile exhibits the recommendation would be to provide at the base of each of these some type of very stable stepping stool or platform, similar to a library step stool. It would also be a possibility to produce replicated smaller scale versions of the iconic structures that are intentionally tactile exhibits. This would enable some visitors, especially children to tactilely examine the icons, exclusive of individuals with some physical disabilities. This would seem to be important so that individuals who have visual impairments can make the further connection with the audio description and the other symbolic icons.

The movies are on a constant loop with very little time in between each of the 5 movies. This is the only time when the lights in the auditorium come up. As a result, there is not enough time when room is lit to be able to get the interpretive information from the iconic exhibits and photo panels. There are two recommendations that will help visitors get a better experience in the auditorium from the exhibits. The first is to start the movie beginning on the hour so visitors can schedule their viewing, and then create a break with the lights up, between each of the 5 movies. The park has also discussed emphasizing each iconic structure with a spotlight when it directly relates to the movie being played. This would give visitors an additional opportunity to explore the tactile exhibits and would benefit those who do not want to stay in the Auditorium for the full cycle of the movie(s).

Education and Justice

Stop two on the self guided tour is the Education and Justice gallery. Upon entering the

room, to the right is a long, angles counter mounted to the wall, a feature common to all four exhibit galleries.

Above the counter, mounted to the wall, there is a series of graphics and text panels with historical notes about significant events and biographical information of key players. Currently, these panels are not portraying the same information to someone with low vision as to other visitors. Please refer to the section above relating to exhibit text to address these deficiencies. The track lighting used to illuminate these panels cast a glare on the text and also depending on the position of the visitor, a shadow making it even more difficult to read what is on the panels. Lighting is a reoccurring problem throughout the galleries and is addressed in a separate area of this narrative report. Please refer to that section and apply the same guidelines for the lighting illuminating these panels. Each of these elements separately are deficiencies, but when all of these elements are combined, it makes the readability of these panels that much more difficult.

Embedded in the counter are two computer touch screen monitors presenting a computer interactive entitled “The Road to Justice.” This first person game explores, via a series of multiple-choice screens, the strategies available to those who fought against school segregation. It is a touch screen with no audio. Interactive computer kiosks are used throughout the galleries and have the same reoccurring deficiencies. Please refer to the separate section of this narrative report about the requirements for interactive computer kiosks to gain insight on how to better address the deficiencies applied to this exhibit. The angle at which these computers are displayed in the counter does not allow for proper viewing of the screen as it cannot be fully seen from a seated position. This not only affects visitors using a wheelchair, but also visitors who choose to sit down at the seats provided for this exhibit. By increasing the angle of the counters, it will help to make this exhibit more accessible to all visitors. There are two speakers mounted into the counter on both sides of the exhibit which gives visitors the impression that there is an audio component of the exhibit; which there is not. The recommendation is to remove the speakers and provide a cap and/or matching piece of material over the existing holes. This way visitors will not mistake the exhibit for having a function that is not working properly and it will also ensure that visitors who have low or no vision or who are deaf or have hearing loss are not under the impression that they are being denied an additional means of getting information from the exhibit.

Also on the counter we find two flipbooks containing period images and explanatory text to provide additional information on Brown v. Board. The text found within the flip books are both black and red in color against a light blue background. The text is also a serif font and is too small. The red text against the blue background does not provide for a proper color contrast and would be difficult for a person with low vision to read. There is also a glare cast on the books from the track lighting that makes reading the pages much more difficult. Please see the section in this narrative report that deals with exhibit text and lighting to address this deficiency properly. The pages in the flipbooks were very hard to turn as a result of a lack of separation between the pages and the fact that the pages did not flip smoothly on the rings. A person with limited dexterity would have a difficult time being able to flip the pages. The recommendation is to find another method of fitting the pages on the rings that will allow for easier turning and to add tabs

at each page so that someone can more easily separate the pages to access them. A possible easy solution would be to provide larger holes to ensure the pages flip easier on the rings.

Within the counter are four Discover Drawers that contain photos of plaintiffs and expert witnesses in the Brown cases. The pictures are backlit and the text is very small. Currently, a visitor with low or no vision may not receive the same information as other visitors. The information provided in the discover drawers shall be made available through an alternative format such as being included in the audio described tour that is recommended for the park to develop.

The last exhibit found on this counter is the Myths v. Facts mechanical interactive. This exhibit presents the visitor with a series of common misconceptions about Brown v. Board. Adjacent to each statement is a roll-over that can be spun to reveal the correct answer. For visitors who need to operate this exhibit with a closed fist, the fact that the roller does not stay in place makes it difficult to read the information. The park should consider adding an audio component that would allow for a visitor to use an attached headset to receive the same information provided. An additional alternative for this exhibit would be to make it into a push button format, so that a person operating it with a closed fist could easily participate in the exhibit. The fact and fiction information should also be included in the audio described tour so that a person with low or no vision has the same opportunity to gain the same information from the exhibit as other visitors.

To the left is the central hub structure with the timeline printed on its surface. Towards the center of the room, opposite the end-wall counter, is the exhibit wall that presents the video installation “The Five Lawsuits”. Mounted adjacent to each other on this wall are a cutout map of the United States and a 40 inch video monitor with a six-button selection panel. Five of the six buttons will play the stories of the five lawsuits that went on to be grouped by the Supreme Court under Brown v. Board. When any of these is activated, an LED lights up on the map denoting the location of the case. Additionally, the map is color-coded by state to denote the status, both legal and de facto, of segregation in that state at the time of Brown v. Board of Education. The sixth button plays an overview of the NAACP strategy; no lights are associated with it. The map provides a rare opportunity to incorporate a tactile exhibit into this site which is highly recommended. To make the map a tactile exhibit, remove the plexi-glass covering, lower the map to within reach range (the recommended reach ranges for children are 18 inches minimum to 44 inches maximum) and provide texture to the map to help denote segregation in each of the states. Tactile textures can be applied to the map to provide information degrees of segregation. A rougher texture might indicate the states with the most segregation and varying degrees of texture types can be used to designate varying degrees of segregation. The roughest surface material could denote the states and areas with the most segregation, and as one progresses to states where slavery was prohibited the surface would be smooth. The state boundaries should be tactile by providing a raised line.

The Five Lawsuits video is open-captioned; however there is very little contrast between some of the backgrounds and the caption text which makes it difficult for persons with low vision to read. The park shall consider alternatives for providing a higher contrasting

open caption source. One possibility would be to provide white caption text within a black text band.

The video information currently is not accessible to visitors who are blind and is required to be audio described. There is also not an assistive listening device available for persons with hearing loss to use when listening to this video as it is not broadcast through headphones but through open speakers. As a result of these videos being played over a set of speakers, they contribute to the various problems that this room in particular has with sound bleed and competing sounds. Two recommendations for this video would be to provide a sound cone overhead which would help to contain the sound and direct it to one central location as opposed to broadcasting it throughout the room. The volume of the movie could then potentially be lowered, which would in turn affect the volume of the other movies as well because they will not be competing at such a high volume. A second recommendation is to add a feature that will allow the visitor to stop the movie when they are done viewing it. Once you press the button to begin the movie it plays all the way through and after discussing the length of time spent at various exhibits with park staff, we found that the majority of visitors do not stay at this exhibit to follow it through to its end. A manual stop feature would help to eliminate extra sound when it is not needed.

In addition, the text on the panel which labels which case is assigned to which button is not in an accessible text format. Please see the section of the narrative report that discusses accessible exhibit text.

The next exhibit in the gallery is the video exhibit labeled “Hall of Courage”. This is an immersive audio-visual experience consisting of a long corridor. On the walls are rear projection video screens that are 14 feet in length and an array of eight speakers. The subject matter is large-as-life archival footage of confrontational events in the history of the Civil Rights movement. The movies run at four separate sections on the four screens. The intention is to provide the visitor with an experience of haste, confusion, rage and violence to better depict what it would have been like during that time. One cannot help but feel overwhelmed for a variety of reasons when you come out of the “Hall of Courage” and that feeling is very intentional on the part of the park. There are select words and phrases that are captioned in red text splashed in random locations across the screen; however the movies in their entirety are not open-captioned. The park shall provide open captioning for each of the individual screens of the movie.

We understand the primary purpose of the “Hall of Courage” may not be to convey to the visitor all of the auditory information but rather to convey visually the experience of the events being depicted. We discussed the installation of sound cones above each of the screens to help direct the audio because when standing in the corridor it is very hard to decipher which audio is coming from which movie screen. This makes it difficult to describe what is happening in an adequate manner to a person with a visual impairment and would also make it difficult for a visitor with hearing loss to gain an equal experience from the hall.

The “Hall of Courage” video runs on a continuous loop and so the audio is being heard at all times throughout the exhibit gallery. It is the loudest exhibit within the Education

and Justice gallery and providing breaks in the video when visitors are not watching it would help to minimize the amount of audio being heard throughout the exhibit. One way of accomplishing this without putting the video on a timer would be to install pressure mats at the entrance of the “Hall of Courage” corridor.

The “Hall of Courage” exhibit relies on the visual characteristics of the video to convey the information and does so on four different screens always playing four different versions of the movie. This means that there are many flickering images all of the time, which would be over stimulating for someone with a seizure disorder. The most common type of seizure caused by this type of environment is called a photoepileptic seizure because they are brought on by pulses of light. Please see the following reference for more information on this disorder and the ways in which the park can improve the environment (<http://www.webaim.org/articles/seizure/>).

Finally the video is not currently audio described and there is not an assistive listening system for visitors with hearing loss. Equal importance must be given to the description of what is displayed visually and to what can be heard in the audio tracks overlaid on the visuals up on the screen in “captioned graphics”. Please refer to the section of the narrative report on audio description and assistive listening systems for more information.

The next exhibit is located in a small sit-down theater showing, *They Gave Us Good Dreams*. This is an 8-minute video program that explores the importance of education to the African American community. The video is open captioned however it currently is not audio described and there is not an assistive listening system available to visitors with hearing loss. The audio description of this video should include important factors such as speaker identification and descriptions of the photographs and important figures in them. Generally the audio described script does not identify the race of individuals, however, in the case of the videos in Brown v. Board and given the subject matter, it would be important to do so in the videos shown. Sound is again an issue in this theatre and several recommendations for the park are offered. The first is to replace the two speakers that are placed on the front wall on both sides of the screen with 2 smaller speakers. Then add two or more additional speakers along the back wall of the theatre so that the sound is dispersed and so the volume wouldn’t have to be played as loud to reach the visitors sitting in the theatre. An additional separate option would be to install sound cones over the seating area in the theatre, which would direct the sound instead of spreading it out. Please refer to the section of the narrative report that addresses sound.

Along the end wall are hanging text and graphic panels and a long counter identical to the one on the opposite end of the gallery. Mounted within the counter is a mechanical interactive called Segregated Activities in which the player attempts to select from a list of activities which were segregated. There are a series of light boxes with buttons, each corresponding to an activity. When any button is pressed, the corresponding light box stays lit. There is a countdown at the end of the game which reveals that all of the activities were segregated. At the current angle of the counter, the answers in each of the boxes cannot be fully viewed by a person in a seated position. To address this

deficiency the park shall adjust the angle of the counter so that it is at a greater viewing angle. Before adjusting the angle for both counters in the gallery, the park shall ensure that there is proper knee and toe clearance provided measured from the floor to the lowest point on the counter (ABAAS 306) (there is a lip under the counter that would be considered the lowest point).

In addition to the interactive, there is another flipbook with information about slavery, the Civil War, reconstruction and Jim Crow. This flipbook should be altered to address the barrier issues identified about the first set of flipbooks in this same gallery. There are also four discover drawers. Within the drawers are photos and objects illustrating the culture and conditions of slavery. In one of the drawers is a manacle, which is what was used to chain the slaves. The Brown v. Board Park has very few tactile exhibits and providing a replica of the manacle would be a good tactile exhibit to provide to visitors with low or no vision. The material in the discover drawers and in the flipbook all need to be included in the audio described tour.

The Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education

Stop three on the self-guided tour is the Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education gallery. Upon entering the room, to the right is a similar long, angled counter mounted to the wall that is found in the four exhibit galleries. This gallery is dedicated to an exploration of the gains made by the modern Civil Rights movement that occurred subsequent to, and in large part because of, the Brown decision. The design and layout of the room mimics that of the other galleries.

The Timeline continues on the central hub. The park shall ensure that the timeline found in each gallery is incorporated into the audio described tour. On the end-wall are the usual text-and-graphic panels. There is also a mechanical interactive that uses a revolving wheel to reveal facts about four historical figures from the modern Civil Rights Movement (displayed in small windows on the counter). The exhibit wheel cannot currently be operated with a closed fist. The park can easily remedy this by adding a perpendicular object to the wheel that would act as a lever so that visitors with low dexterity can operate the exhibit with a closed fist. The text on this exhibit is too small and has poor contrast, which makes it inaccessible for visitors with low vision.

In the counter are two additional sets of Discovery Drawers containing more information from the Civil Rights Movement. There is also a pair of flipbooks with additional details on the modern Civil Rights Movement. Both of these exhibits should utilize to the same guidelines set forth in the other exhibit galleries and in the sections specifically related to exhibit text and hardware.

Next is an area that addresses the topic of how the Brown decision and subsequent civil rights gains have provided models for progress by other groups, such as Native Americans and persons with disabilities, as well as for movements in other nations. However this information is portrayed on large floor to ceiling placards that do not provide a contrast between text and background, have text written in non-accessible serif font and have a tremendous amount of glare from the track lighting above. All of these factors combined make it very difficult if not impossible for a person with low

vision to get the same information that other visitors are receiving.

The next exhibit is a video shown in a sit-down theater titled, *Pass It On*. This short film explores the current state of civil rights. The video alternates between the metaphorical dream-vision of a young man who sees figures from the past running through a desert landscape to reach one another and to keep a metaphorical “civil rights” baton moving forward. In addition the video presents day man-in-the-street interviews with youth revealing their impressions of the state of civil rights in the psyche of America’s youth. This video lacks an assistive listening system and audio description. Please refer to the section of the narrative report that addresses assistive listening and audio description.

On the outside wall of the theatre is the video exhibit entitled *What Do You Think*. This exhibit is a simple PowerPoint presentation style with no audio and all text. The park shall ensure that the information provided at this exhibit is made available via the audio described tour.

As found in the other galleries the end-wall has text and graphic panels, and there are also the flipbooks that are on the topics of the growth of African American scholarship and the impact of the US Civil Rights movement in South Africa. There is also a set of Discovery Drawers containing books and CDs by African American writers and musicians. Lastly, there is a pair of listening stations called “Music of Protest”. Visitors may don headphones and choose via a pushbutton panel from a selection of ten different songs. The park shall make available song lyrics scripts for visitors with hearing loss. These scripts will include the lyrics of each of the songs. In addition the park shall provide an assistive listening system at these stations.

Expression and Reflections

Stop four on the self-guided tour is the gallery Expression and Reflections. This gallery space provides a variety of activities to the visitor as well as is a place to simply sit and reflect. This space is also where the park houses its temporary exhibits.

Along the edges of this gallery there are two flipbooks on podia. These contain highlights of artwork by Herb Taus depicting moments of conflict and social tolerance.

Immediately to the right is a magnetic wallboard with a collection of words that can be used to create phrases, hopefully reflective of our thoughts on civil rights or race relations matters. We recommend the park provide word magnets with both Braille and print to allow users with visual impairments to fully participate in the activity provided.

To the left, along the east wall, are four computer interactive kiosks. These are the “Expression Stations”, a computer interactive consisting of three primary activities designed to encourage expression on the part of the visitor. They are a drawing program, a message-writing program, and an audio recording program. In addition, there is an option to access a glossary of terms, a chronicle of relevant legal cases, a digital version of the timeline, and a compendium of messages and artistic creations from former visitors. These interactive computer kiosks have a knee clearance of just 24 ½ inches in height and a clear width of only 21 ½ inches. To properly use these exhibits,

a parallel approach would not be appropriate which means that a forward approach would be needed. The park shall provide kiosks that meet the requirements for knee clearance and clear width for a wheelchair to pull underneath the kiosk (ABAAS 306). The angle at which these computers are displayed in the counter does not allow for proper viewing of the screen, as it cannot be fully seen from a seated position. This not only affects visitors using a wheelchair, but also visitors who choose to sit down at the seats provided for this exhibit. By increasing the angle of the counters, it will help to make this exhibit more accessible to all visitors.

These interactive computer kiosks are touch screen and contain audio portions. These are the same interactive computer kiosks in terms of physical makeup used throughout the galleries and have the same physical reoccurring deficiencies. Please refer to the separate section of this narrative report about the requirements for interactive computer kiosks.

These interactive computer kiosks are different from the others in that they do have an audio component. The park shall ensure that there is an assistive listening system provided for visitors with hearing loss.

In the middle of the exhibit gallery panels are displayed that discuss the Chinese Exclusion Act. These panel exhibits are part of the park’s temporary exhibitions. The park has a responsibility to ensure that all programs provided by their park are accessible, and this is to include items such as temporary exhibits. The floor panels that are in the gallery are not accessible due to the text type, size and contrast. The information provided on the panels is also not being provided through an audio described tour. The park shall establish a set of criteria for all future temporary exhibits to ensure that they are hosting only accessible exhibits.

Bookstore

The bookstore is open during normal operating hours at Brown v. Board and offers the visitors the opportunity to purchase videos, music, books, patches, etc to remember their visit. Within the bookstore the carpet pad that was put down to protect the flooring is not firm enough. This significantly increases the amount of force (roll resistance) needed to propel a wheelchair over a surface. The firmer the carpeting and backing, the lower the roll resistance the surface will have. A pile thickness up to ½ inch is allowed, although a lower pile provides easier wheelchair maneuvering. If a backing, cushion or pad is used, it must be firm. The park must explore options for either removing the pad or providing a more accessible surface.

There are approximately 20 – 25 movie titles available to purchase through the bookstore and it could not be verified that all titles were made available in a captioned version. The park shall decipher which videos they are currently selling that are not captioned and seek out a version that is. The bookstore also plays one of the videos that they sell during the day, and should ensure that it is played with captions displayed at all times.

Men’s Restroom

The exterior door is one in which you have to pull it towards you to open and the handle is currently just a loop. The existing loop handle does not provide enough of a gap between the handle and door to operate it with a closed fist.

The mirror in the restroom is mounted so that the bottom edge of the reflective surface is 41 inches above the floor surface. Lower the mirror so that the bottom edge of the reflective surface is a maximum of 40 inches above the floor surface (ABAAS 603.3).

The grab bars in the accessible stall are both (rear and side) too small by half an inch and are mounted at the incorrect location. Ensure that the rear grab bar is a minimum length of 36 inches and that the side grab bar is a minimum length of 42 inches. Remount according to the requirements in ABAAS 604.5.1 and 604.5.2.

The changing station is out of reach range and needs to be lowered to ensure that the handle when folded upright (closed) is at a maximum height of 48 inches above the floor surface (ABAAS 308.2).

Women’s Restroom

The grab bars in the accessible stall are both (rear and side) too small by half an inch and are mounted at the incorrect location. Ensure that the rear grab bar is a minimum length of 36 inches and that the side grab bar is a minimum length of 42 inches. Remount according to the requirements in ABAAS 604.5.1 and 604.5.2.

Historic Structures Clause

The National Center on Accessibility recognizes that the Brown v. Board of Education structure qualifies as a Historic Structure. The fact that it is a historic structure does not exclude the park from complying with accessibility standards. Many parks around the country have been able to make changes to historic structures to bring them into compliance. Through NCA’s assessment of Brown v. Board of Education NHS, deficiencies were noted regardless of the classification of this structure. It is the park’s responsibility to decipher which, if any, of the deficiencies can be remedied. According to the new ABA standards, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation has established procedures for Federal agencies to meet this responsibility. Exceptions apply only when the State Historic Preservation Officer or the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation agrees that compliance would threaten or destroy the historic significance of the building or facility. The park should work with their Historic Preservation Specialists to determine what possible changes can be made.

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- | | |
|--|---|
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| Cindy Barry, Washburn University Foundation | Chris Meinhardt, Community representative |
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| Rev. Carl Frazier, Community representative | Mark Weaver, NPS-Nicodemus National Historic Site |
| Joyce Grigsby, City of Topeka Human Relations Commission/ Community representative | Martin Wisneski, Washburn Law School |
| Lisa Hammer, Community representative | |
| Karen Hiller, Topeka City Council | |
| June Jones, Community representative | |
| Wendy Lauritzen, NPS-Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve | |



Brown v. Board of Education NHS
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